10 Death March kara Hajimaru Isekai Kyousoukyoku

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Part 1 - Sea Travel

Satou's here. Unlike with whales, I feel that there are many people who will frown when they hear about eating dolphins. Since I myself feel sick if I hear someone's eating cat and dog, it must be because of different food cultures.

◇

"Ya' guys! Captain Arisa-sama is departing yarr'~"
"Yessire~?"
"Aye aye~"
"Nn."

Arisa and the others are playing pirates cosplay on the bow. Arisa is wearing a captain-like elongated hat and a coat with long hem, with a shirt and trousers below. She's got a rapier on her waist.

That's some slightly retro pirate huh. I thought that she was going to cosplay the pirate king, but it seems to be different.

Pochi and Tama are wearing pirate underling-like clothes, that are shirts with stripped patterns, and cropped trousers. The two are equipped with eyepatches that I've made yesterday. Making normal eyepatches wouldn't be interesting, so I made it in the shapes of a small deformed dog and cat.

Mia is wearing sailor-like clothes, or more like a white sailor uniform, and white trousers.

"Master, the tea is ready."
"Thank you, Lulu."

I get down to the area with steering wheel that's on a bit higher plane, and sit on one of the simple tables that have been lined up on the deck. After Lulu told Arisa that it was the snack time, they stopped their pirates play and rushed here.

"Huh? The sunlight here is gentle."
"Fufuhn, I've put up the [<<Sunlight Protection>>] that can cut UV from the sunlight since it'll be bad if Lulu and the others get sunburns."

It's one of the thing I've ordered from the scroll workshop in the duchy capital.
Natalina-san was confused since she didn't seem to understand the purpose of the magic.

"There's no wind~?"
"It's true nanodesu. Even though the wind blows on top, it's mysterious nanodesu."
"It's magic."
"Naruru~"
"I see, nanodesu."

I've used the normal Air control magic for the wind, calming the wind here while sending it to the sail at the same time.
When I didn't use it, Lulu's and Nana's skirts got rolled up by the wind. Particularly for Lulu, since she was wearing a one piece, up to her navel could be seen. Of course, officially, I didn't see it.

Our ship is currently sailing in the bay.
There are hardly any monsters in the bay.

"Dolphin! A dolphin just jumped now!"

Arisa has quickly found a dolphin that's swimming side-by-side with the ship. Please don't talk when you have something in your mouth. I create a tray sized <<Flexible Shield>> and prevent the crumbs from falling.

Arisa rushes to the rear deck behind me. The young troupe aren't the only ones lured there, Lulu and Nana also follow.
What about Liza? I look for her, it seems that she's just taken a harpoon attached with rope from the storehouse below. Apparently for Liza, it's like fishing a prey.

"It's somersaulting nodesu!"
"Prey~?"
"What are you saying, it's unthinkable to eat dolphin~ that's something to adore you know."

I think I shouldn't tell Arisa that I've eaten dolphins in a lodging at Wakayama prefecture before. Well, they're certainly cute, so I guess adoring them is fine too.
I thought that Nana was going to react the most, but she didn't seem to have much interest. Lulu is saying, "That's really a big fish", but that's an expression for when you're talking about cuisine.

"However, it looks delicious."

Liza is trying to hide the harpoon behind her, but she can't.
Everyone beside Arisa seems eager to eat the dolphin, but let's overlook it for Arisa's sake.

Even though I don't think that the dolphin feels the danger for itself, it's separating from the ship after a bit while.

◇

After the afternoon snack time is over, the ship safely gets out of the bay to the open sea.

"Uwah, it's shaking."
"It's shaking more than the airship."
"Nn."

Arisa, Lulu, and Mia seem uncomfortable with the ship shaking. It shouldn't feel like it's shaking so much for a ship this big, but I guess it can't be helped that it's shaking more than

when it's on the river.

"It's alright, it's just water below us. You can just swim if you fall."

Liza remonstrates calmly. It's quite different than when she's riding the airship.

"Nn, I can swim."
"Impossible, I can only swim for 10 meters by dog-paddling."
"I've never swum before since I was raised in mountains. Ara? Arisa shouldn't have never swam before too right?"

I see, Arisa and Lulu can't swim huh. I'll teach them how to swim when we stop by on the shore next time. I guess they need swimsuits before that huh.

"Nyahahahaha~"
"Tama, it's shaking too much, it's terrible nanodesu!　Master, I'm falling nodesu~"

I can hear excited voices of Tama on Pochi who have climbed on the watchtower on the main mast before we got out of the bay. Pochi's voice seem somewhat like a scream, but since it subtly sounds like she's having fun, it's probably alright. If she really falls, I'll catch her with [Magic Hand] so it's fine.

I'm enjoying everyone's reaction like that, but then a monster appears on the radar.

Since it'll be dangerous if we meet enemies like this, let's make the ship levitate.

I touch the board on the center of the steering wheel. I charge it with magic power to activate the aerodynamic engine. The ship comes out of the sea's surface and continues to rise until the altitude where the wave crest don't touch it.

"Ara? The shaking stops?　Geh?!"

Arisa becomes speechless when she peers below from the ship's deck.

Huh?
Didn't I say that this sailing ship could fly?

Everyone beside Arisa is calm, and has no question about the flying ship. We were flying in an airship when we went to Boruenan forest after all. If one doesn't understand the theory, they probably would think that a sailing ship can fly just like an airship.

"Don't tell me, this ship is also an airship?"
"That's right. It doesn't have enough power to fly high though."

At most, it can only fly 100 meters above the ground. It also doesn't have propellers, so it can only go to the direction the wind blows.

Arisa is muttering, "Gununu", and, "Cheater". How cruel, I've made this by applying things that various people have taught me.

After confirming that the shaking has stopped, Pochi smoothly descends with the rope hanging on the main mast. It seemed Tama had found something, she also descended after Pochi.

"A big shadow is coming closer~"
"Shadow nanodesu?"

The thing that Tama has found is the Long-Neck Dragon that's chasing this ship. It has 'dragon' in its name, but it's not of the dragon race but monsters.

◇

A long neck breaks out of the water surface.

"Uwaah, it's Nessie! It's a real nessie isn't it. I wonder if it'll bark with 'Pyui'?"

Arisa's tension is strange.
I understand her feeling since it's a famous UMA. But, I wonder where did I hear that it barked [Pyui]?

"You grilled eel! I recommend that you prostate yourself before my stomach!"
"HUROOOOUNN!"

Grilled eel she said. The Horn Snake from before was certainly delicious though.
The Long Neck snapped from Nana's provocation, and roared. Behind me, Arisa says, "That's not Pyukichi" while tearing a handkerchief. I understand that you're having a little drama, but Liza and Lulu will scold you later you know.

"Shoot!"

Lulu, Pochi, and Tama pulled the triggers on the shotguns following my command. There's the fact that the target is big, the magic power buckshots that spread in 30 meters round shape hit the Long-Neck Dragon.

"...■■ Water Hold"

Mia's capture magic is invoked a bit later after the three, and the water ropes begins to coil around and bind the Long-Neck Dragon. The rope can't quite bind it, probably because its high level.

"...■■■■■■ <<Dimension Cutter>>"

The space magic blade that Arisa's fired makes a deep wound on the Long-Neck Dragon's trunk.
Despite the wound, the giant tusk of the Long-Neck Dragon still approaches the big shield that Nana has set up.

Nana shoots arrows of nature magic that pierce through the Long-Neck Dragon's eyes. The

Long-Neck Dragon that has had its vision robbed keeps charging to Nana, but Nana evades it quickly.

I'd hate it if the ship breaks from the Long-Neck Dragon's attack, so I use <<Flexible Shield>> to protect the deck.
Liza who has amassed magic power into her spear drives it through the Long-Neck Dragon whose movements have stopped after being hindered by the Flexible Shield. Right then, Pochi and Tama assist with shotguns, shot from the deck.

Arisa pierces the Long-Neck Dragon which has stopped moving with Dimension Cutter, and Mia uses Water Burst on that wound to make it explode. Toward that torn long neck, Liza and Nana attack with magic edged spear and sharp edge invoked magic sword respectively, and it's finally defeated.

Since the Long-Neck Dragon is as big as the ship, its dismantling is done by using [Magic Hand] and [Flexible Sword] from a distance.

The Long-Neck Dragon is quite lightly delicious, although not as good as the Horn Snake. There should be some dishes using fins inside the cooking books that I've bought in the duchy capital, let's challenge myself to make it next time.

Part 2 - The Two Earldoms

Satou's here. There's a saying, too many boatmen makes the ship climbs the mountain. It's a saying that's on my mind whenever I attend a meeting without anyone in control, but in the other world, ships climbing mountains seems to be a normal scenery.

◇

Our sailing ship is flying quite far on the open sea so we're not meeting other ships. Our altitude is only a bit higher than the wave crest, so the ship should look like it's sailing normally seen from afar.

That said, the ship is moving three times than an average ship, so the discerning people should notice that this ship isn't normal.

We're fully enjoying the sea travel while sometimes ignoring pirates, exploring undersea ruins, and swimming on the shores.

Since I had carefully chosen the course while looking out for ships around the area, the journey has become relatively roundabout. Halfway through, I realized that I could use illusion magic to make a reflection of the sea, but since we still had to not get too close to other ships all the same, I didn't do the idea.

We've journeyed about 1200 kilometers to the south west on the beginning of the third day. The ship is currently cruising on water surface with normal speed. It's for entering the port in the bay of the Ukeu Earldom ahead. Lulu and the others seem like they're getting seasick, but please endure it for a little bit.

◇

There are seven galley ships that are as big as our ship, and three boats anchored in the port of Ukeu Earldom. It seems the port facilities are lacking as only four of them are in the port, while the remaining six are anchored on the sea slightly away from the port.

I also lower the anchor on our ship on the sea slightly away.

Since there's no need to drop by the port, we've decided to lower the small boat and go on a sightseeing tour in the port town. After everyone has boarded the small boat, I use [Magic Hand] to put down the boat on the sea surface. Of course I did it from the location where it couldn't be seen from the port to not make us stand out.

I leave the ship's guard to the parrot-shaped scarecrows type 8. They can't fly even though they're shaped like parrots. They can only monitor or send alert about intruders, and also doing a bit of wire manipulation. This wire manipulation can move dolls that looks like sailors, and activate trap. The dolls don't have battle capability, but since they look like people working from afar, it's quite enough for crime prevention.

I entrust Liza and Nana to row the small boat. Even though it's called small boat, it's big enough to carry eight adults.

"What kind of port town is it here?"
"It's the port of Ukeu Earldom, but we can take a shortcut to the port of Kirik Earldom if we cross that mountain. We don't have to make trip around the peninsula that extends 500 kilometers far from the port here if we use that shortcut, so it's a big time saver."
"Won't it only take two days for a 1000 kilometers round-trip?"
"Arisa, you should not think that the speed of master's magic ship is normal."
"You're right. It'll take more than a half month for a normal ship."

Liza advices Arisa. It seems to be a subject which other member has no interest in, they're playing around by dipping their hands in the sea surface. Tama desperately stretches her body from my lap while attempting to touch the water surface with her hand. She should just get down from my lap if it's so hard to take the posture.

"How long will it take to cross the mountain?"
"It's about 20 kilometers long, and there seem to be a rest area every 4-5 kilometers, so there seem to be a lot of people who get off their ships from here."

I think it'll be good if they just use magic to briskly make a canal here. They might have no budget to employ magicians though. Since it looks like it could become an important point for marine transportation between the royal capital and the duchy capital, I think there should be people who'd like to invest on it.

◇

Since an official-like man on the port gestures for us when we've gotten close to the wharf, I lead the boat to the place where it should be docked.

"Hey, merchant-san. Never seen you before, this your first time in Ukehaba port?"
"Yes, it's my first time here."

I take the ID plate from my chest and show it to the man while lending my hand to Lulu who's getting down from the ship.

"Please excuse me, Chevalier-sama. The stagecoach heading to the port of Kirik Earldom has left the port, and the next service will be for tomorrow morning. The only inn that's suitable for noble-sama is the Lighthouse Light Inn, shall I arrange someone to take you there?"
"Ah, thanks. We're going back to the ship when the night comes, so there's no need for the inn. How much is the anchoring fee for the small boat."
"It's free for one ship. If you need guards, one can be dispatched for one copper coin a day."

The official is talking smoothly as it seems that there are a lot of nobles who have gone ashore here going to the royal capital. I decline the inn recommendation, and hire two guards. However, one copper coin a day, isn't that too cheap?

There are a lot of beastkin working on the port facilities. The raccoonkin, and the apekin are particularly the majority. There are the small ratkins too, but they're not working for loading-unloading things, but odd jobs and other jobs that don't require power.

"Isn't it Chevalier Pendragon over there?"

I turn my head toward the voice that calls me, it's the head of the noble family whom I've visited several times in the duchy capital. His name is baron Eguon if I'm not mistaken. He's someone who commands the route for getting spices on the archipelago that's located on the straight line ahead the peninsula. It's thanks to him that I could procure the needed cumin and turmeric for the curry.

"Excuse me for the long silence. Baron Eguon."
"What a coincidence for us to meet here. Thanks to you, the sales of spices have had rapid increase. I've come here myself to reinforce the trade you know."

Come to think of it, Earl Houen said to me that there was an unprecedented cooking boom in the duchy capital.

Apparently, there will be a cooking tournament sponsored by Earl Houen in three months time. I wonder if that was the reason why I was randomly challenged to cooking contests when I was visiting the scroll workshop in the duchy capital. Since I had heard the thing about the tournament earlier, I made the empty promises that I would accept the fight if they won the cooking tournament.

"If you were just one day faster, you would have met Viscount Rendo, how regrettable."

The Viscount Rendo whom he's talking about is someone who's dealing jewelries in the duchy capital. I had visited his engraving workshop and gem polishing workshop several times. Viscount Rendo seems to be currently in a trip for his customers that are spread from the duchy capital to the labyrinth city. It seems that Baron Eguon has come to this port with a ship, he's heading toward the port of Kirik Earldom with the stagecoach from earlier.

Since it's just right, I ask the earl about earl Ukeu's and earl Kirik's personalities, and their territories information while being careful as not to get in his busy schedule.

It seems that Earl Ukeu is, politely speaking a honest person, and frankly speaking a bumpkin. His territory army is relatively strong, it seems there are only several galley ships for the marine force. They can't guarantee the safety of marine transportation then? But, pirates are like thieves that can appear anywhere in the first place. Therefore, it seems that the marine force of the territory army is reserved for the time monsters attacking the port, not for securing sea route.

Earl Kirik is a dandy and cheerful during trading, but on the other hand, he's frivolous, and skimps on money. His territory army seem to be weak, but it seems it has come to rival Earl Ukeu's force by enhancing the army's equipment and the number of personnel. His marine force seem to be slightly better than Earl Ukeu's.

Looks like the two earl's houses have bad relationship with each other. Moreover, it's not only limited to the top positions, the territories people are also competing with each other, and strifes tend to break one way or another.

Even recently, they're having an argument for the one that should bear the expense of maintaining the bridge that connects the highway between the ports of the two earldoms in the borders of the territories over the valley. And this time, it seems they're having a dispute as to whose workers should be the one that work on it, baron Eguon tells me so with a tired expression.

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There's an inner gate outside of the port facilities, and beyond that is the residential area. The population is about 8000 people, and 40% of them are demi-humans. There are a lot of slaves, and most of them are for manual labors like unloading things on the port.
Probably due to the subtropic climate, a lot of the townspeople are wearing clothes with high exposures. Lots of young women are wearing wonderful clothes such as vests for wrapping their breasts, and mini skirts below. Most men are also only wearing shorts and thin shirts or naked for their upper half. For some reason, the women are busy working, while the men are taking nap and having drinking bout on the trees' shades. It's a strange scene, but that's probably just how it is in this land.

"It's like a southern country here~ let's might as well eat some local specialties!"
"Meat~"
"Meat is nice nodesu!"
"It's said that the fish are delicious in a port town like this."
"Fruits."

Liza has unusually chosen fish. We enter the large restaurant that's just nearby. Just like with the other surrounding houses, it's made from assembled thin logs, big banana-like leaves seem to be stacked on top to create the roof. It has no wall unlike other houses, so the openness feels nice.

After we've taken some open seats, a waitress onee-san with nice body comes to take the order. She's a beautiful southern country-style woman with black hair.

I'm told that a fish dish with an unfamiliar name, that is Gebo, is the specialty here, so I order that. Since it seems to be quite a big fish, I order only one serving. I've seen people making dried fish along the way here, so I also order grilled fish, and grilled dried fish for the next one.

I asked whether they have meat here, but since they only had water rat's meat, I ordered the grilled water rat meat only for the interested parties. I've expected the three beastkin girls to do so, but Lulu is also going for the challenge. I know that she's doing it for research purpose, but if she's going to be teary eyed, I think she shouldn't push herself.

There seemed to be abundance of fruits, so I asked the waitress to combine the fruits on a

platter.

Gebo is a longtooh grouper-like big white fish boiled in a dashi that's made of the fish as the base. The dish is already delicious to eat as it is, but the waitress recommends us to eat it together with a pilaf-like rice on a rice bowl by piling the white meat on top of it and pour the broth on the top.

"The smell is a bit harsh, but it's a taste you can get used to isn't it."
"Yup, and the smell will disappear if you just put this Japanese pepper-like thing."
"Oh, you're right."

This Gebo is a hit. I can generally guess the recipe, so let's stock some fish later on. Since they seem to live on the seashore, we might even be able to catch them ourselves. I've seen the fish sauce being sold in jars earlier, I have to remember buying it when we get back.

"Oily~"
"It's splitter-splatter inside my mouth nanodesu."
"You two eat it without complaining. Lulu, don't force yourself and eat the fruits there to wash off the taste. I will eat your leftovers."
"I'm sorry, Liza-san."

Apparently, the water rat is a miss. It's the first time I've seen Pochi and Tama not liking meat. Price-wise, the grilled water rat is relatively expensive, about as much as the mountain of fruits that Mia is grappling.

"Is it delicious Mia."
"Nn, tasty."

In front of Mia, there's a literal mountain of varied fruits piled up. The fruits that look familiar to me are pineapples, coconuts, bananas, kiwis, and mangos. There are also several kind of citrus family fruits. There's no apple or pear. Although there are some differences like the kiwi having red flesh inside, they're similar with the fruits in my former world. Particularly the banana and the pineapple, both the tastes and the textures are the same. The mango is a false-mango. Although it looks and taste similar, it has rubbery-like texture. Arisa who's nabbing small pieces of the fruits from the side is having an impression, "This and that are acceptable" after munching them for a bit.

◇

After thoroughly enjoying the southern country-like town, we returned to the ship with various souvenirs. Fortunately, the scarecrows didn't seem to have any turn to shine.

When the day has darkened, I produce night fog. It's [Fog] magic. Unlike when it's used by Mia, the whole port becomes shrouded in thick fog. I circulate the fog to the mountain by using [Air Control] magic, after three hours, the fog has reached the port of Kirik Earldom on the opposite side.

I slip the ship under the cover of the fog, and cross the mountain by relying on the map.

Halfway through the mountain, the bridge on the border of the earldoms has fallen, while viscount Rendo and his retainers are dying on the bottom of the ravine. I've made sure the fog doesn't get to this area, but the bridge probably fell since the maintenance kept getting postponed. They're unlucky people.

The [Magic Hand] can't reach it from the fog, so I make our ship float still in the mid-air, and rescue them as Nanashi with black mask clothing.

Unfortunately, the horses and the coachman have died, but the Viscount and other guests are still alive, so I stealthily use [Magic Hand] to move them to Earl Ukeu's side. Furthermore, I've used [Aqua Heal] for them while hiding my figure, so they probably will survive. I put some food and water below the shade nearby just in case.

The inside seems to be in an uproar, but if they're energetic enough to make a fuss, they're probably going to be alright even if I leave them.

I go back to my ship, and finish crossing the mountain without meeting with anymore trouble this time. I keep the ship flying inside the fog, and anchor it on a small bay located on the outskirts of Kirik Earldom.

Part 3 - To the Labyrinth City

Satou's here. When I hear beach, I'm reminded of beach huts. For playing on the sea, the whole roasted squids and corns, the garnish-less curry, and the stale ramen are indispensable after all. In order to make that a reality, first I have to search the corns.

◇

Two days after we set off Kirik Earldom, we arrive on the sea near Taltumina the trade city. If I entered the port just like this, I'd have to anchor the ship there, so we disembarked on a beach with no life sign on the evening, and decided to advance with the horse-drawn carriage.

The horses are also happy with the ground that they haven't seen for a long time.

There's no human habitation around this area, probably due to the many monsters here, but there's a desolate highway beyond the nearby mountain, so I'll go to the trade city via it, and continue to the labyrinth city from the main highway after that.

"Master, night marching is dangerous. I wish for practicum on the sandy beach."
"Fireworks~?"
"Fireworks are nice nodesu! Swoosh is nice too, but crackles are good nodesu!"
"Nn."

The practicum that Nana is referring to is about fireworks.
It's going to attract monsters, but I guess I can just exterminate them if they get close.

I hand over short wands to everyone, and put it with the requested [<<Fireworks Illusion>>] on.

"Kururu~n."
"Beautiful."

Tama and Mia are running around the sandy beach with normal gushing fireworks on both their hands.

"Watch this properly!"
"Okay."

Arisa and Lulu are playing letter-writing on the darkness of the night by using the fireworks. It seems the letters are formed from the afterimages. I thought that she was going to write『I love you』, or『LOVE』, but, please stop writing messages that's way over it like『When is the yobai?』. Please learn from what Lulu's written:『Love you so much』.

"I wish for a chick."

Nana?

"I wish for a chick nanodesu."

She said it twice. Do you like chicks so much? I couldn't imagine the shape of the fireworks, so I tried to create a chick shape on the sparks that were scattering ahead of the short wand. The firework was not something that existed in the preset patterns, so the preparation took some time, but I tried my best to meet the expectation of the excited eyes on the expressionless face of Nana.

"It's a wonderful chick. Master, it disappears when I touch it."
"Because they're illusions."

Suddenly touching like that, what a troubling girl. If it wasn't a light magic type, she'd have gotten a burn. I put the same magic on the short wand once again, and warned her not to touch it.

I'm enjoying plain sparklers together with Liza.

"This is nice."
"Yeah, it is."

Before I knew it, Arisa and the others have gathered and set off sparklers.

Some boorish monsters were trying to intrude from the sea and the forest, but I repulsed them with [Remote Stun] before they went into the range of Tama's crisis perception. If this was a game, they would probably attack precisely, but it seemed that the monsters' perception ability weren't high, after hitting them with remote stun bullets several times, they had either got scared, or alerted as they went back to the sea and forest.

The next morning, we lost to the beautiful sandy beach, and enjoyed ourselves swimming in the ocean. We're not journeying in a hurry, but as it is now, it's likely that we'll camp here for several days, so I finish it by the noon, and return back to the journey.

◇

"What's this carriage. There's no shaking, it's eerie."

Complains come up even without the shaking huh. How troubling.

This carriage isn't like the wagon that we've used before, but instead a small box-shaped carriage like the one we've ridden inside towns. Not only that it has self-propulsion function on the cart section, but there's also a slim aerodynamic engine loaded below the passenger section. It has low output power, so it can only fly several meters above the ground for a short time at most. However, it can float 10 centimeters above the ground to absorb the shaking without any problem. I've properly grounded the cart section, so it should look like a normal carriage from outside.

The coachman's box and the passenger section are completely separated, so the member of the passenger's seats and the coachman's seats alternate every two hours. Right now Tama

is the coachman with Lulu in the coachman's seat. Nana and Liza are riding horses fully armed, running side-by-side with the carriage.

As expected of the desolate highway, we met monsters several time, but since they were just small fries, they were easily eliminated by Liza's spear thrusts, and Nana's nature magic arrows from afar. I was surprised to see Nana who had become able to simultaneously fire five magic arrows at once before I knew it.

We could see Taltumina the trade city on the evening of that day. This city is in direct control of the king, just like the labyrinth city.

Just like the duchy capital, neighborhoods overflow on the outskirts of this city.
Outside the city's rampart, I see a long line and line of people and carriages that have been waiting for their turn to enter the city until the evening before the gate close.

Despite getting involved with annoying things like dueling with another noble since I couldn't cut into the line, we were somehow able to enter the city before the gate closed.

Good grief, please stop the childish-like thing.

◇

Since inns that are too high class refuse to let anyone beside humans stay there, I ask the gatekeeper to refer for a high-grade inn that allow demi-humans to stay.

The inn certainly has refined interior, and the room is also spacious, but I don't like the superficial attitude of the clerk. We'll stay here today, but it's going to be at different inn next time.

"Really, who does he think he is saying things like 'sleep on the floor since the fallen hair of the beastkin will dirty the bed'!"
"It's terrible."
"I express dissatisfaction."
"Mwu."

Arisa and the others seem offended, yet Pochi and Tama themselves are--

"The floor is also fluffy~?"
"Arisa, you're going to get hungry if you're mad desuyo?"

--they don't even seem to care.

Liza is quite satisfied just for the fact that the inn doesn't make them stay in the barn like slaves.

When I complained it to the inn manager, he normally scolded that clerk, so it doesn't seem to be the policy of this inn. Since Tama and Pochi replied, "Do as you see fit~", "I forgive nodesu." when the clerk apologized, I won't hold a grudge.

◇

I had a slight expectation since the port is the international trading port of Shiga Kingdom, but there were only cheap things from foreign countries, and the goods themselves weren't any different from the port of the dukedom.

The sole result are the fact that equipments made from monster's parts are exported outside the kingdom. It's not too popular in the kingdom, but it seems that they're sold for high prices outside the kingdom.

Seems that there are stagecoaches which depart to the labyrinth city and the royal capital from this trade city at fixed interval. They depart once every three days, but since about five carriages depart at the same time in one go, it's relatively safe in the way. Looks like there are a lot of peddlers who depart by matching their schedule with those stagecoaches.

Since the stagecoach will depart in two days time, the gatekeeper recommends me to stay for another day before departing, but since it'll be annoying to deal with troubles if we're with other people, we keep going.

After we've crossed three mountains, barrier pillars begin to stand out more. It's probably the kingdom's grain-producing region around here. This is the first time in this world I see fields extending as far as eyes can see. Since the climate is warm, they've already begun the planting it seems.

After passing through several towns, we came across Kelton, the intersection city that connects the duchy capital, the labyrinth city and the royal capital. There wasn't any place or event worth mentioning in this city, but it was selling clothes, and cloth that were in fashion in the royal capital, and the soft white bread. Unlike the royal and duchy capitals, there wasn't plentiful enough water to cultivate rice, so their staple food seemed to be wheat, or rather bread.

Since there are villages that have windmills for milling the wheat, the scenery is pretty idyllic. If there were tulips growing, it would feel like we were lost in Holland.

After we've passed through a city called Furusau that's between Kelton and the labyrinth city, the number of villages start to decrease, and the wastelands gradually begin to stand out.

Although the villages that we sometimes came across have windmills and barrier pillars, the soils were obviously barren compared to the villages before.

And then, after we crossed the last mountain before the labyrinth city, it could finally be seen. Of course I'm the only one that can see it from this distance. Even though the area beyond the mountain is big enough to fit a (Japan) prefecture, there isn't any village until the labyrinth city. Looks like there are several rest areas that looks like bus stops built on the highway, one every few kilometers. I stopped by one of those rest area once, but it was just a simple building to keep out of rain and wind with an almost dried-up water well nearby.

"Sand~?"
"The wind is gritty nodesu."

From the area after the mountain, the wind has yellow sand-like small sands mixed in. Since there's a vast desert beyond the mountain range that's beyond the labyrinth city, it's probably blowing from there.

For the sake of Lulu's beauty, I use [Air Control] to prevent the sand wind coming near the area around the carriage and the horses. Of course, I make Liza and Nana to move near the carriage.

Although it's a wasteland, it's not like there isn't any plant growing. Not only weeds, there are also short bushes growing sparsely. There's also an unusual one among them. It looks like a cactus, but I wonder if it's really a cactus? According to the AR, it's called labyrinth cactus, so it seems to really be a cactus.

When we've come closer to the labyrinth city, I can see several holy stone monuments like the ones I've seen near the Seryuu city labyrinth, built on regular interval. Countless number of them are built perpendicular to the highway. I see from the map that the holy stone monuments are built until the mountain range before the desert in semicircle shape. It's written in the traveler's journal that the labyrinth is restricted and unable to extend to the kingdom thanks these holy stone monuments.

I can see a jet black mountain beyond the labyrinth city. According to the traveler's journal, there seem to be a labyrinth below that mountain.

On both sides of the city's gate, there are stone golems in the shape of Nio (the two guardian deva kings) with grim face standing. Either of them is a level 40 strong golem. They look like marble golems from outside, although it's probably not because they're matching it with the marble gate.

"Giants~?"
"Huge nodesu!"
"Announcing that those are stone golems."

Pochi and Tama who have put their head out of the window are surprised to see the golems. Come to think of it, these two didn't see the golems in the duchy capital huh. They've only ever seen Living Dolls and the Many-legged Tank Golem in the elves hometown, so this is probably the first they've seen these normal golems.

"It looks quite strong. I'm not confident I could injure it even with the magic spear. As expected, once you've broken its stance with magic--"

I ignore Liza who has naturally begun to think of the way to defeat it.

"It was far~"
"We've finally arrived haven't we."

Arisa and Lulu who are in the coachman's seat are having moving impressions.

"Now let's go, our fights begin from here on!"

Please stop it with the aborted END-like proclamation.

Part 4 - Explorer Guild

Satou's here. I wonder why are memberships have so much pressure on the wallet. I remember that I was able to narrowly get by when I've become a working adult, but there were a lot of time when my wallet ran out of money during my student days.

◇

"It's a big silver coin nanodesu."
"Medal~?"
"Yup, I've got it from Giril."
"Nn, Medallion of Attestation."

Giril said the same thing too if I'm not mistaken. He gave this to me when I got to borrow his mansion that's on the labyrinth city.

"Giril, mean~"
"Yes nanodesu. He didn't let us enter his home nodesu!"
"He wasn't being mean. I was making some dangerous drug in that mansion, so I asked him not to let Pochi and Tama in for your own safety."

It was about when I was making the sleeping drug for the jellyfish back then. That reminds me, I've forgotten to made up to Pochi and Tama since various things happened then.

Arisa is banging the coachman's box ceiling.
Be moderate with your excitement okay?

"Kya."
"Hey, it's a bit serious."

The carriage makes a sudden stop as Lulu screams shortly. The front gate ahead has become noisy.

I peek outside from the carriage's window, the golems on the gate have moved several steps ahead their original locations and kneel down with one knee taking retainer positions. Oh, it's a fantasy-like scene.

『Master, we have awaited for your return.』
『Master, we congratulate your safe return.』

The voices are echoing on the surrounding. Voices were coming out of the medal.

"Don't tell me, this is the reason?"
"Nn."

Mia takes the medallion from me and holds it overhead toward the golem.

『I am acting for the master. I am happy for thou greetings. However, thou duties are important, thus swiftly come back to it.』
『Acknowledged.』
『Acknowledged.』

Mia spoke to the medallion, replies came from the golems, and they went back to their original pedestals.

"You've done well to know that."
"Nn. Aze taught me."

If possible, please tell me so before the golems moved. Giril didn't tell anything beside that it was the key to the mansion, so he probably intended this to be a surprise. He's an old man that's playful in some strange point.

◇

"Did you see? The gatekeeper golems kneeled before me!"
"Ohii-sama, raising your voice that high is unbecoming of a lady."

I heard such conversation from the white luxurious carriage that had stopped in front of us. According to the AR, she's a princess of Norooku Kingdom. She's of the same age as Lulu. She's not beautiful, but she's a cute girl with light brown hair. She's wearing expensive-looking silk clothes. Looking at the map that I've photographed from the Marquis Lloyd's mansion back then, Norooku kingdom seems to be further north of Eluett Marquisate that's directly north from here. It's acting as the buffer zone to the Saga Empire.

Since I don't want to get involved with them, we quickly line up on the queue to enter the city.

The soldiers wearing red hard leather armors in front of the gate are checking the IDs of people who are entering the city. Looks like they're checking the cargo of merchants, but it's relatively lax. There is no tax or custom to enter unlike with other cities. Hence the queue is short, and we should be able to enter the city without using the noble privilege.

"Welcome to the labyrinth city, Selbira, Noble-sama. Excuse me, but please show me your ID."

I show the humble soldier my ID plate.
However, how did he know that I was a noble.

"Please excuse me, Chevalier-sama. Is this your first visit to Selbira?"
"Yes, it is."

I inadvertently used polite speech toward the courteous gatekeeper. Nina-san would have scolded me not to use polite speech toward subordinates if she heard it.

In summary, the gatekeeper told me that there is no prohibition for items that can be taken

into Selbira, but there are various items that cannot be taken out of the city. Especially taking out magic cores without authorization is a serious crime, he warned me. In addition, it seems that carrying out monster meat and poison taken from monster's poison gland is forbidden too.

"And also, even though this isn't a prohibited matter, the stalls around the west gate only sell food made from monster meat, so it's better for you not to eat them even if they smell good."

We enter the city with such advice as the last one.

Just like the other cities, there is a 100 meters wide open space right after the gate. But, the one thing different is that's there is no main street that goes through the city. According to the traveler's journal, this city is build with monsters invasion in mind, and the streets of this city are configured like a maze in order to prevent the invading monsters reach the downtown. Due to that, there are a lot of people who get lost, even the ones who have lived here for a long time.

I change place with Arisa in order to guide Lulu.

"Lulu, I'm going to change with Arisa, so please stop the carriage."
"Yes."
"What's wrong? Do you want to sightsee from the special seat?"

I receive Arisa who presents both her hands, and put her down to the ground. She doesn't sexually harass me like usual today. Apparently, she's too excited to do that.

"Hey, first let's go to the guild and register as adventurers!"

Shouldn't we get an inn first?
Moreover, it's explorer, not adventurer.

"And then, and then! First we're going to register as F-class adventurers! And then, an unpleasant key adventurer will pick a quarrel with you,『This isn't a job for women and children y'know?』, then you easily beat him up!"

I don't think there's a reckless guy who will pick a quarrel with a noble.
Moreover, F she said. It's not like alphabet is not known, but honestly, it's a minor letter set, so I don't think they're using it.

"Then! After attracting attentions, the newbie who has entered the labyrinth produces an unbelievable results, and the receptionist onee-san gets drawn to him."

What would you do if she does.

"Then, a rare or peculiar species is found among the result, and you get called to the guildmaster room and specially ranked up to C or B rank in one go~"

The youth troupe is clapping their hands undivided toward Arisa who's rattling on with rough breathing while staring at the air. Lulu is having small claps soundlessly with a warm smile.

"Master, if we're going to the guild, should I ask the gatekeeper the way?"

I tell Liza who has gotten off the horse that it's alright.
Even without asking, the three-story white stone building in front of us is the Explorer Guild.

It can't be helped, if we're going to the inn like this, the excited Arisa will attack me. It's still morning anyway, I decide to go to the Explorer Guild ahead.

◇

I tell Lulu to bring the carriage to the parking lot behind the Explorer Guild.
A guild worker who seems to be the horse caretaker guides the carriage to an free space.

"I'm going first~"
"Wait~"
"Nanodesu!"
"Sly."

Lured by Arisa who couldn't keep calm, Pochi, Tama and Mia ran like, ta-ta-ta, toward the front door. I leave the horses that have been dismounted to the little child-like girl, and tell Liza and Nana to go ahead.

Looks like the coachmen of other carriages are staying.

"I'm sorry, we've come here to register those girls. Can I leave the carriage to you for a while?"
"Yes, Shire. Sire."

The little girl casts her eyes down while turning red as she seems embarrassed. I pat her head lightly, and asks, "Please take care of it okay." I'll give her some tips later.

I go together with Lulu to the front door of the Explorer Guild.

The inside is nice and cold, wonder if they're using cooling magic.
The floor is using marble, and it feels like a lobby of some kind of a big company.

There's a meeting booth-like place on the right side after the entrance, guild staff-like people and merchant-like people are negotiating there.

In the interior, there are bank-like counters, and only two among the eight counters that have receptionists. The receptionists are only a career woman-like woman on her twenties, and a handsome man who's over thirties.

Somehow, Arisa and the others are talking with the woman. Did she not like a man over thirties even though he's handsome. Since there's no other customer, the male staff is

looking at Arisa and the others with a warm smile.

"Quickly, quickly!"
"Master~"
"Here nanodesu!"
"Here."

I go to the counter where the noisy little girls are calling. The staff onee-san is smiling wryly.

"Nice to meet you Chevalier-sama. Please allow me to be the one responsible today. My name is Kena. You're going to register for this occasion right, but is it going to be the normal registration? Or is it going to be the special registration?"

Now then? I've never heard such thing from Sir Zotor and the explorers whom I've gotten along in the duchy capital though?

"What's the difference?"
"For special registration, the explorer ID you're going to get is the golden plate one from the beginning. Of course, the charge will be different than the normal registration, but it's a magic tool that sends signal of its specific location at fixed intervals. When you're entering the labyrinth, you have to write down the planned return time of your exploration, and if you haven't returned after the grace period, the rescue team will rush to the place where that signal is sent."

Something like specifying location, no thank you.
Moreover, rather than rescuing, I feel that it's for collecting mementos of the dead.

"Since I'm not planning to go that deep, the normal registration please."
"Yes, I understand. Then, please write everyone's name here."

I was going to take my ID from my chest, but is it unnecessary?

"You don't need the ID?"
"Yes, it's fine with the name only for your first registration. Although few, there are some explorers who register with alias or house name."

Fumu, looks like the management is loose. Even though they're letting people in to the place that's like a national mine that produces resources, is it fine without control?

After we have told her our names, she hands over wooden plates with strings attached. The wood plates are drawn with 3 digits, 2 digits, and 4 digits numbers. Of course they're not arabic numeral, but numeral that Shiga Kingdom uses. As for our plates, the first five digits on our plates are the same, and the last four digits are in serial. Apparently, the first three digits, and the two digits are for years and months respectively.

"These wood plates are going to be your IDs for the time being. Wood plates are mark of apprentice explorers, after you've brought back five magic cores from the labyrinth, we're going to give you the true explorer plate of Bronze."

There are five IDs: Wood, Bronze, Red Iron, Mithril, and Gold. It seems that the Red Iron plate is given to main explorers who can collect several magic cores monthly, and the Mithril plate is only for first-class explorers who have defeated the Floor Master. Looks like Gold plate is only for wealthy people like nobles or someone who has paid great amount of money.

"Hey, can we enter the labyrinth once we get this?"
"Yes, it's alright."

The female receptionist answers with a smile to Arisa's question, and gives a warning to Arisa and the others.

"However, do it after you've straightened your equipments okay?"
"Ye~s!"
"A~ye"
"Yes, nanodesu!"
"Nn."

Continuing after the excited voice of Arisa, the excited voices of the youth troupe resound in the guild.
Now then, shall we enter the labyrinth.

Part 5 - To the Labyrinth

Sato's here. In a game, due to item limits, it was often the case that I had to tearfully throw away the items I acquired during a quest. I miss having to worry about which to keep and throw.

◇

"Ooh!　Why didn't you peek at me changing."

Not peeking at someone's changing is quite the natural thing to do, yet she's calling it bad.
Arisa and the others who have finished changing go down to the lobby in the first floor. There is no bar-room in the first floor of this inn. It's a high-class inn as even this lobby need separate payment to be used. They serve tea that's as good as the one Lulu makes.

This inn is located behind the Explorer Guild.
I actually wanted to go to the mansion that Giril had referred, but since I didn't know if we could immediately stay there, we got ourselves an inn to keep the horses first.

By the way, about the magic tooled carriage, I switched its appearance to look exactly like a normal carriage when the stable boy had left the place. The dirtiness are slightly different, but since I've made use of Evidence Destruction skill, it's probably going to be alright.

"Now then, shall we go."
"Master, it is presumptuous of me, but you should wear some armor."
"Reporting that equipments are important."
"I'll be standing by today. I have Nana and Liza to protect me."

This robe is made of Yuriha fiber, and I've used the whale leather to make the mantle and the boots, so most attacks shouldn't be able to get through it.

Just in case, I pick up the fairy sword that's leaned on the sofa while I'm wearing the thin gloves.

Since it seems that there is a carriage that goes from the front gate to the west gate every two hours, we take that to go there. Originally we should've waited for another hour before it departs, but since the passengers have reached the quota that is eight, it's going to depart just like that. It's quite flexible huh.

"Ehehehe~ this is my first real labyrinth. It must be different than the Spriggan's trials."
"It's completely different~?"
"It's not a playground like that nodesu!　It's a true battlefield that makes your blood boils nanodesu!"
"You two, you would get hurt in the labyrinth if you're like that. Focus your minds."
"Roger~" "Nanodesu!"

Liza reproves Pochi and Tama who are acting like seniors to Arisa. Mia seems to be tense,

she has little to say. Nana is operating normally, so she's probably fine.

"Chevalier-sama, I'm sorry, but would you be willing to allow one more person ride in?"
"Yes, feel free to."

Although it's called a carriage, this one only has seats without a roof, there are four two-seater seats lined up. If someone is as small as Mia, three of them can occupy one seat easily. When we were about to embark, the female staff asked so. Since having another one wouldn't be a problem if Tama sat on my lap, I agreed to it.

"I'm sorry for forcing in. My name is Gina, I'm a daughter of Chevalier Daryl.
"Nice to meet you, I'm Chevalier Pendragon."

It's a girl around 16 years old who's equipped with a dark brown hard leather armor, a round shield and a flail. She's about as tall as me. I don't know the precise size since it's pressed by the armor, but it looks like it can rival Nana's. She has shoulder-length red hair, reddish brown eyes, and she's slightly tanned. I wonder if she's from a knight family, she's level 6 despite her age, and she also has Shield and One-handed Staff skills.
The flail has two iron balls connected with chains to its one meter long iron pole. Those iron balls probably improves the centrifugal force. I've seen it a lot in games, but this is the first time I do in this world.

◇

Gina seems to hate, or rather, be afraid of demi-humans, she doesn't seem like she wants to sit beside Liza and the others, so she's sitting between Lulu and Arisa. Isn't it cramped?

"Gina-sama, are you an explorer perchance?"
"Umu, I've become one just now. There are people from my town that are also explorers, so I'm going to look for them near the west gate and then go tackle the labyrinth together."

Arisa talks to her in polite tone. Lady Gina speaks like a knight, I don't know if it's by nature or if she's acting it.

I feel slightly odd with Arisa's tone, but since she's also acting like that with the hero, I leave it alone.

After leaving the quarter where the riches live, we've come to the wonderful street that seems to be the pleasure quarter. The calm atmosphere of the city up until now changes completely, engendering vulgar atmosphere. Although the beautiful women from the multi-story buildings aren't particularly waving their hands, I wonder what's with this excited feeling. I feel like I've understood Arisa a bit for looking forward to the labyrinth. Of course I don't say it out loud.

After leaving the pleasure quarter, we come a narrow aisle filled with small shops that are full of clamor. Armed men and women who seem to be explorers are having negotiations on those shops.

"Uwah, everyone is wearing gaudy armor aren't they~"
"Gaudy gaudy~"
"They're like Tori-san nanodesu."
"Kabuki?"

Hero Daisaku, what did you teach to the elves hometown. Moreover, Arisa, your true self is showing.

Nevertheless, those armors are probably made from monster parts, but I wonder just what kind of meaning do those pointless looking ornaments have? I guess it's for menacing things?

Still, equipments of explorers sure are peculiar. The equipment of the explorers who have participated in the duchy capital match are normal in comparison to these. Looks like even explorers know TPO.

There are as many young people as there are people with mysterious equipments. There is someone who's wearing sewn wood block as armor, or people who have stone axes, or black stone spears. The equipments of the magic hunters in Puta town were more normal.

◇

We get off the carriage in front of the Explorer Guild of the west gate.

The Explorer Guild here is full of people. I guess the Explorer Guild that's right before the labyrinth is more convenient for them.

"Yo', the newbie explorer noble-sama over there. How 'bout it, do you need the labyrinth map? It's three silver coins."

The market price is one big copper coin. Even ripping-off has a limit too. Lady Gina beside me is astonished, "Is it that expensive."

The map shop man seemed to think that I, who didn't falter even after hearing silver coins, to be an easy target, he tried to promote it further. Let's ignore it, and haggle it down first.

"I'll buy it for one big copper coin."
"Oy oy, ain't that too much of a beating?"
"I don't particularly need it if it's more than that."
"Wait, I'll give you for one big copper coin especially this time. We're selling the most accurate labyrinth map 'round here. If this map is useful, please buy from us again by all means."

I exchange one big copper coin for the map. 'First area' is written messily on the edge of the map that's drawn with it. The map is full of strange lines and symbols, I don't know how to read it.

"How do you read this?"

"That's another big copper co--"
"This much, include it in the fee earlier."

The small man was going to snatch more money, but I covered his words, and coerced the service. Looks like they're various trial-and-errors for depicting the three-dimensional map in a plane paper.

"What is this symbol?"
"That's a sign monument."

Summarizing the small man long-winded explanation, sign monuments are something that the olden days explorers have set up in the areas that have been completely explored, they're built on a fixed interval in the labyrinth. Three information, [Area Number], [Distance from Entrance], and [Serial Number] are carved on these monuments.

It has one more important function. It glows red when monsters are approaching, and blue when it's people. It's to prevent friendly fires between explorers in the dark labyrinth.

"However, young master. Even if it's glowing blue, don't let yer' guard down eh?"
"Why?"
"There are these thieves called Lost Thieves who aim for the explorers who have hunted monsters."

I see, there are those kind of guys in MMOs with PK too.

"What should we do if we're attacked by those guys?"
"That's, difficult to say."

If the other party attack first, you're free to either kill them, or sell them off as crime slaves, but it seems that it's hard to tell them apart if they pretend to be some friendly common explorers. Thus, if you meet other explorers, you have to be cautious and keep some distance away from each other, unless you're acquainted with them.

However, putting aside Arisa and me, I think it's hard to know if the other party has a criminal record or not. It seems that it can be judged with the Yamato stone at the entrance of the labyrinth. In case you catch them before they kill someone, there are staffs who have Mind Reading and Authenticate skills standing by who will judge for it it seems.

Since Arisa and the others have become impatient, let's put off the information gathering for now.
I got more information that I had thought, so I secretly gripped him with one big copper coin.

◇

Since lady Gina said that she was going to look for her acquaintances, she went to the Explorer Guild building, and we parted way.

The west gate seems to be normally shut, unlike the eastern gate.

When you show your wood ID to the gatekeeper, they open the gate for a bit. Being the gatekeeper here seems to be quite difficult.

When we get close to the west gate, children who are wearing short clothes approach.
Are they beggars, or orphans?

When I check on it, their occupations are [Baggage Carriers]. There are a lot of girls for some reason.

"Noble-sama, please employ me."
"Employ me, I'm alright with two pennies a day."
"I'm fine with one penny a day!"
"Hey, don't interrupt me."
"I don't need money if you give me food. I'll do anything!"

Uwah, if hero Hayato heard this, he would shout "No touch, Satou!" Liza gently push away the little girl who was trying to grab my clothes with the blunt tip of her spear.

The children inched back slightly from Liza's glare, but they keep promoting on.
Every child is level 1-2. I can't take them into the labyrinth since it's dangerous.

Pochi and Tama look like they want to say something as they seem to sympathize with the children who have growling stomaches. It can't be helped.
I take the children to the shop that's selling grilled skewers nearby, and buy one for each one of them. The skewer seems to be made of monster meat from what the eastern guild people have told me, but since other explorers are normally buying and eating them, it should be alright. Even though the skewer is quite big, they're only one copper coin each, cheap.

"Uwah, it's a labyrinth frog skewer."
"It's a feast."
"Delicious. I'll work hard noble-sama."
"Un, I haven't had feast like this for a long time."

Just what do you guys usually eat.
I've also bought some for Pochi and the others since they look like the want it.

We leave the little girls there, and go to the labyrinth. For some reason the little girls were going to come with us, but I left them since I couldn't let them.

"Little girls are looking here like they want to join the party."

Noisy.
Arisa says something like a system message from some game, but I ignore her.

The little girls were looking so reluctant toward us who had gone through the west gate that was closing, but I steeled my heart and did not go back.

Part 6 - Passage of Death

Satou's here. When I was playing a console-RPG-like tabletop RPG, there were a lot of quests without completion deadline time. I felt that it was odd as everyone would then just take those quests since they had nothing to lose.

◇

"Ooh! It really feels like the genuine entrance to a labyrinth isn't it."
"Nn."

There's a downward stair beyond the opened gate, and after descending five meters below, we come to a semi-underground passage that's five meters high and ten meters wide.

Looks like Pochi and Tama have remembered Seryuu's city labyrinth, they've encamped themselves on both my sides in silence.

Since the passage has skylight windows on the ceiling, it's sufficiently bright. It's not bright enough to read a book, but it's also not so dark you can't walk without a torch.

The other side of the skylight windows is probably the above ground, I can sometimes see soldiers who seem to be on patrol there.

I don't know whether the passage's way is meandering, or how long until it reaches the entrance of the labyrinth ahead. It seems to be called [Passage of Death] here, and the labyrinth is still a bit more beyond.

Since I'm free, I check various things on the MAP.

The labyrinth city Selbira has 110.000 people in total. Among them Shiga Kingdom army that's called Labyrinth Area Army is 10.000 people. The army is in the giant fortress to the southwest. The average soldier's level is 8, higher than other territory army. It's slightly higher than retainer knights, so they're probably elites. Since I have a letter from Nina-san to the general of this army, I have to see to it after we're done with the labyrinth exploring.

The army that's in charge of the labyrinth city defense is not this kingdom army, but the army of the present viceroy of Selbira, Marquis Ashinen. I've had some slight trouble with this person in the trade city, so I don't really want to get involved with him. It should be a while before he returns here from the trade city, so my duty should be fulfilled if I just give the house some greeting and passable gift before he comes back. I'll be excusing myself from troublesome things.

Now then, the search continues.

There are unexpectedly few explorers, no more than 5000 people. According to the traveler's journal there are 1000 young people who come here to become explorers every year, so I think this number is too few considering that. Fundamentally, they reside in the

western area.

There are about 1000 people who are working as baggage carriers like the little girls earlier. Most of those people are working outside the labyrinth city. Are they working in some kind of public construction since they failed to find job in the labyrinth?

There are 50 people in the labyrinth entrance ahead, I wonder what are they doing?

◇

Four explorers are coming from ahead. Their level are low at 7-9. No, considering levels of knights are around 10, they might be mid-level explorers or prospective newbies. Looks like one of them is heavily injured.

"It smells of blood nanodesu."
"Someone's coming~?"

Pochi and Tama quickly notice the appearance of the explorers from the meandering path ahead.

"Nana, protect Arisa and Lulu."
"Understood."

Is Mia fine. I thought so, but Liza has already moved in front of Mia.

"I am Jeje of『Red Ice』! We have an injured person! Please leave the dispute for later."

A young man who seems to be the leader shouts so while waving his hand. I thought that it was a chuuni nickname, but it seems to be their party name.
I can't see the face of the injured person, but the person's armor is split widely, and blood seeps out of the shirt that's been used to wrap the wound.

"Uuh, that's a really terrible wound..."
"Master."
"Nn, Satou?"

Arisa and Lulu become very pale when they look at the injured person. Mia asks with her eyes if it's fine for her to use magic, but I signal not with my hand.

"I'm Satou, a beginner explorer. Please use this medicine if it's fine with you."

So I say, and hold out two diluted magic potions from the shoulder bag. This should be enough for recovery judging from their levels.

"I'm sorry, but we don't have anything. I'll pay you back when the leader who's selling the magic cores catches up. It's shameless of me, but can I have the medicine beforehand?"
"Yes, go ahead."

Since I originally intended to give them for free, I quickly replied and presented the magic

potions to Jeje.

"Huh? Don't tell me that these are magic potions?"
"Yes, that's right. Rather than that, drink it to that person fast."
"Yeah, I'm indebted."

One bottle recovers nearly 60% of the health. I can't see the wound since it's wrapped in cloth, but it should be closed now.

"Then, we'll take our leave."
"P, please wait. We still haven't paid the cost."
"I've got those from someone, so please don't worry about it. We'll meet again if fate allows."

We can't keep loitering here all day, so we part with them. I heard warning from behind, "There's an abnormal outbreak of ants in area 1-4 of the labyrinth, don't get close to it." so I waved my hand to express my thanks. That's just right, let's head there today.

Mia and Lulu are trembling, maybe they're anxious after seeing someone's injured. Arisa's tension has also fallen, but it doesn't seem as bad as these two.

"You two, should we stop today?"
"I, I'm fine."
"I'm fine."

The two force themselves to be stouthearted and walk forward with clenched fists.
If their conditions aren't restored when we get to the labyrinth entrance, let's go back.

◇

There's a big around-five meter tall door at the end of the passage. That's probably the labyrinth gate. A deep red devil's face is embossed on the jet black door.

There's a 10 meter long 5 meter wide counter beside the gate. There are several people who seem to be guild staffs behind the counter, and also four high-leveled magicians who seem to be their escorts.

At one part of the counter, the leader of『Red Ice』and a middle-aged man who seems to be a guild staff are apparently arguing about the price of magic cores.

On the opposite side of that counter, children are sitting down, occupying 30 meters space.

They're human children of around 10-14 years old, the ratio of male and female is approximately the same. There is no slave. Everyone's levels are 1-3. They're wearing short clothes, and sandals knitted from weeds. There are also children who only wears trousers and without sandals. They're all not explorers, but baggage carriers. None has weapons or armors.

"Children~?"
"There are a lot of children nanodesu."
"Mwu?"

Pochi, Tama, and Mia tilt their head together while looking puzzled. I don't think they've arranged it beforehand, but they're doing it splendidly uniformly, inviting a smile from me. Arisa is saying, "I was late." while looking vexed, but let's pretend that I didn't see it here.

Now then, those children lock-on to me with their eyes without even a sound or sign. It's a bit, scary.

"I wonder what are they doing?"
"Their eyes are scary."

Arisa also wonders. Lulu feels that it's spooky, I totally agree.
I was worried that Nana would abduct them since they were all children, but--

"Denying that I'm fine as long as it's a child."

--so she says. She might have her own criteria too.

"Master, the staff is calling."

I didn't notice that the staff was calling me until Liza brought it to my attention.

"What is it?"
"Excuse me, but are you a beginner explorer?"
"Yes, please take care of us from now on. I'm Satou."
"Ara, how thoughtful of you. I think you've already heard it when you are registering, but we will buy the magic cores you get from the labyrinth here. And also, we will be buying monster parts from the notices that are hung on the wall over there, but since some of those applications posters aren't always present, there is no guarantee that they will remain when you've gotten out of the labyrinth so please take care."

I've only noticed it after the staff explains it smoothly to me, but there's certainly a big board that looks like a bulletin board standing, and it's stickied with a lot of posters. Most of the clients seem to be craftmen or stall merchants. There is no request from the guild. There is a blank space on the bottom half of the poster, it's written with symbols that seem to be date and name.

Anyone who aims for the request probably fills the space.

Beside the posters, there are children with slightly better clothes. According to the staffs, there are no small numbers of explorers who can't read, so the children of merchants who can read and write stay here to read aloud or write for them and earn some small incomes.

"I recommend the applications for labyrinth frog meat and shells of insect monsters since they're always present. There are some persons who mistake the labyrinth frog with wart

poison frog and carry the meat back with them, so please be careful."

The staff tells me some recommended requests. Since behind me, Liza is nodding while muttering, "That's delicious." she probably knows the difference. She probably remembers about the barbecue party in the labyrinth of Seryuu city.

Right, might as well ask about it.

"By the way, what are those children?"
"Ah, they're children who work as baggage carriers. They're waiting to be employed by explorer parties from there. The children waiting outside change with them every two hours, and they're prohibited to promote themselves."

She added that it's because the echoes on the wall were noisy.
Still, for carrying baggage, isn't it better to employ adults or beastkin rather than those children?

When I was going to ask about it, the labyrinth gate opened, and a 10-person explorer party came out. It's a party with mostly warriors averaging at level 20. The three beastkin among them seem to be baggage carriers.

"Yo, Vena. Sorry for interrupting you, is the request for Grey Spider meat still there?"
"I'm really sorry. The『Owl's Beard』has brought it this morning, so I think there won't be any request at this time."
"Ceh, those guys again huh. Can't be helped, Vena, I'll grill this meat. Oy, you brats, I'll give some to you guys. You can say, "Dozon-sama is cool", or "Thank you Dozon-sama" all you want while you're eating them."

After the bear-like bearded explorer declares so to the children, shouts of joy that split my ears are raised.

Pochi and Tama were also lining up as they seemed eager to eat it, but they came back immediately when I called them. I'd feel sorry to snatch the feast of those undernourished children after all.

We show the gate staff our wood plates one by one, and tread upon the labyrinth. The guild staffs looked surprised toward Pochi and Tama who opened the solid labyrinth door.

Well now? What is it I wonder?

Part 7 - Labyrinth Exploration

Satou's here. The labyrinth from the classic masterpiece, the one that has been made into its own game genre, seems to impress people. Although, in the other world, it has stronger implication as an American dream than a romance.

◇

"Uwah, this time it's stairs huh..."
"Arisa, maybe it's good for you to start weight training or jogging to build up your physical strength."
"Uy~"

I lightly push the back of Arisa who looks like she's about to cry, and advance on the stair.

There's a broad stair beyond the labyrinth entrance. It's not a normal or spiral stair, but a meandering one. The stair probably has been installed on this place with its broad winding slanted path and high ceiling.

There are crenels along the stairway rails on fixed intervals for shooting arrows below.

They're most likely used to cope with monsters invasions. There is a barbette on the center of every stair step, enshrining artillery wrapped in a cloth. Two soldiers are standing by on each barbette.
They seem to be free as they're playing a board game similar to Shogi. It's probably better than drinking liquor or dozing off. The soldiers aren't human but beastkin such as wolfkin who look strong.

Since I'm free while we're descending the stair, I try to use All Map Exploration for a bit.

Wide.
Even compared to the withered labyrinth of the duchy capital, it's unbelievably wide.

Even only three areas of this labyrinth can completely swallow the entirety of Seryuu city's demon labyrinth.
The search only ranges to [Labyrinth of Selbira: Upper Stratum], yet it's likely that there are hundreds of areas. Just like the demon labyrinth and the duchy capital labyrinth, the labyrinth has lower stratum that extends underground, there must be at least twice the areas more.

In one area, there are roughly 100 corridors and rooms connected three dimensionally. There are also an area where there is only one room, or one that contains 1000 small rooms only among those areas.

And then, despite such vastness, there are 30 areas which have explorers within. Most of them are in the first area and the seven areas that adjoin it. In the underground, there are around 2000 explorers, 500 soldiers, 300 baggage carriers, and 400 lost thieves. There are

also several dozens other people beside those.

Arisa and Lulu have become tired along the way on the stair, so Liza and I carry them. Lulu who's burying her embarrassed face on my back is ticklish. Leaving Lulu aside, I think it's better for Arisa to train her physical strength.

◇

There are many people in the first room of the first area. This room is bright since there are lighting from magic tools-like things that have sprouted on the wall. As for its size, I wonder if it's easier to understand if I say that it's about the size of three standard gymnasiums connected?

All of the soldiers beside the ones on the stairs are here in this room. About 90% of the soldiers are doing practice swings commanded by senior-like person on one section that's on lower elevation. It's not just soldiers as there are also magic soldiers like Zena-san among them, but there are few of them compared to Seryuu city.
However, the [Red Ice] people earlier should have reported about the monsters outbreak, yet they're so carefree. Maybe something like monsters outbreak is just a daily happening huh.

There are also stallholders beside them. I'm amazed that they're doing business in this place.

Most of them are food stalls, grinders, equipment repairmen, or general stores, but there are also some interesting ones.

"The noble-sama over there, would you like to touch someone who bears the『Item Box』gen before you level up? One touch is one silver coin, but if you're lucky the『Item Box』may dwell in your slaves or subordinates you know?"

That seems interesting, but every one of us has already touched Arisa who has [Item Box] herself, so it's meaningless.

"Noble-sama do you carry enough food and water? It's one copper coin a meal. How about it?"
"Noble-sama, do you have the map? We're selling the first area map for one silver coin."

They promoted it as such, but I declined since I wasn't interested. I was slightly interested with the take-away food, but since its ingredients were unknown, I passed on it.

In this room, there are three big corridors that are five meters wide each. There aren't just big corridors, small ones also exist. There are more than 10 of them, but none connects to other area. There are armed staffs of explorer guild before the door that leads to the interior of the main big corridor. There's a spiral stair that leads underground in that interior, and it continues to outside of the map search range. Let's invade it alone next time.

We're walking to the big door that leads to the [Area 1-4] that Jeje of the [Red Ice] earlier

has mentioned. The soldiers who had made military encampment by piling sandbags in front of that door also warned us not to get close to area 1-4 since there was a rumor about ants outbreak there.

"It's alright. We're only going to see things today, we're going back after going around the first area."
"Ah, that's fine then."

I tell so to the soldier who's giving us warning, and go through the door that Liza and the others have opened.

◇

When we're advancing through the big corridor, leaving the big door behind, Liza verifies our formation.

"Master, what should we do about the formation?"
"When we're moving, the center is Lulu with Mia and Arisa on her sides, the advance guards are Nana and Tama, the rear guards are Liza and Pochi."

With this formation, we'll be fine even if we get attacked from the front and the rear.
Moreover, they should be able to fight without me, and it might be better if I don't act too overprotective and let them grow up.

"Mia, use『Bubble Searcher』magic, and confirm the frontward okay."
"Nn."

Mia replies Arisa's request in short, and invokes a magic. It seems that they always use this magic first and foremost in the Spriggan training grounds to search for enemies.

This magic produces around 30 bubbles that float in the air. They're brittle as they will break if you just touch it, but you can feel the things around it like feelers. The detection range is only about 30 centimeters from the bubbles, but the bubbles can be separated several hundreds meters away from the user. Moreover, the effect lasts for about 2 hours if the bubble doesn't break, so it's quite useful for exploring labyrinths.

However, its weakness is that the magic will be canceled if the user uses other magic.

"Should I use lighting magic? I don't have light magic skill, but I can do at least that much you know?"
"No, there's no problem even though it's dim, so it's alright."

There are dim lighting equipments on one side of the corridor that illuminate only from knee-high to the ground. That's probably the Sign Monument. Just like what I've heard, its color changes from white to blue when we're approaching.

Moreover, Pochi and Tama can detect monsters and traps, while Mia's search bubbles can detect things that approach from outside their ranges. There are small passageways and

cavities and shelters indistinguishable with the former piled with spiderwebs and dust on the corridor's wall that appear at fixed intervals.

"There's something~?"
"I hear sounds of battle from beyond the path nodesu."
"Nn, a battle."

Pochi and Tama noticed the battle ahead, and slightly later, Mia's bubbles seemed to have caught on the battle between six demi-goblins and five explorers 300 meters ahead.

There are air holes on the ceiling of the labyrinth corridors that constantly emit low-pitched noise, as the consequent, it's difficult to sense presences from faraway sounds. In fact, even Pochi and Tama seemed to be slower than usual to notice it.

The explorers and the goblins seem to be in a small corridor branched from the big corridor we are in. They're not too far away from the big corridor. They seem to have noticed us approaching, one of the explorer raises his voice to warn us.

"These goblins are ours. You go over there."
"Acknowledged."

I don't want to distract them too much, so I answer shortly.

It seems to be quite the melee battle as the explorers are hurt equally, even though they're only up against level 1-2 goblins. These explorers are around level 3, so they're probably newbies. Like I've thought, they're all warriors. Explorers that have magic skills are only around 5% of the whole, so they're probably scarce.

There are hardly any monsters in this first area we're in, maybe because there are too many explorers.

There are some corridors where monsters are moving within, but it seems they're not connected to where the explorers are, so we never meet it. After observing it for a while, battles begin in a faraway corridor that's connected with that corridor by the tunnel.

I see, so monsters POP up with this mechanism.

◇

"Enemy coming."
"Insects, three~?"

Yep, correct.
Fly-type monsters came out of the small tunnels around the ceiling. There are three of them. Every one of them is level 3.

"You insects! So I declare."

Responding to Nana's provocation, the flies made nose dive attacks.
Even though this was a commemorative first battle, it's over before Arisa took off the cloth wrapped on her wand. It was settled with Pochi's and Tama's stone throwing, and Liza's spear attack.

"Uu~, the enemies are too weak~"

I comfort the vexed Arisa by slightly roughly patting her head. I praise Pochi and Tama who are wagging their tails, and Liza who looks like it's obvious yet also slightly triumphant.

After one hour, we're getting close to the big junction that connects to [Area 1-4]. We've gathered nine magic cores while passing through several rooms and junctions to here. Since one person should need five magic cores to raise their rank, it will be for two people's shares one more.

We've only encountered fly-type monsters like the ones from the beginning. We also came across normal rats, insects and bats that weren't monsters, but since they wouldn't give much EXP, we left them alone.

A lot of monsters are reflected on the radar at last.

Around 300 ant-type monsters, and 12 people from three explorer parties and baggage carriers are coming to where we are.

Part 8 - Labyrinth Exploration (2)

Satou's here. I think that positioning is important whether it's in RPGs, War Simulations, or FPS. You really can't make light of terrain effect you know.

◇

"Satou, enemies, a lot."

Please stop talking that way like you hate me.
Slightly after Mia, Tama who's in foremost position seems to have caught on the footsteps' sounds of the explorers.

"People coming~?"

Pochi steps forward from behind, and puts her ears on the ground beside Tama.

"This sounds must be from insects nanodesu."

Covering Pochi's words, Arisa who looks grave asks me the exact number of the enemies.

"How many are coming?"
"Are you asking about the enemies or the people?"

I felt like doing something slightly mean. She replied quickly, "Enemies", so I honestly told her that it's 300.

"Th, three?"
"Master, advising to withdraw."
"Master, I also agree with Nana."
"Nn."

I holds the trembling Lulu on my arms. Everyone has judged correctly and carefully. Muscle brains who would want to fight enemies that are 40 times their number wouldn't be going to the labyrinth after all.

"It's alright~?"
"It's alright nanodesu. It'll be easy if we're with master nanodesu!"

They're here, the muscle brain girls.
Pochi and Tama have taken their curious signature poses. I ask the two while patting their heads.

"What would you do if you're not with me?"
"Of course, run away nodesu."
"Helter-skelter, quick~?"

Oh? They're not muscle brain, but trusting me.

"Yup, that's good. You shouldn't fight enemies three times your number or more even if they're lower ranked than you."
"What should we do when you can't avoid fighting them?"
"What do you think you should do?"

I return Arisa's question with a question.

"Right, I guess make use of geographical advantage?"
"Correct, you should take the position where the enemies can't make use of their number."
"It's the basic when I was solo hunting in net games after all~"

I see, that kind of knowledge huh.
I had only ever fought against small fry that could be killed in one blow when I was solo-ing in the MMOs I played, but various things seem to be different depending on the games.

◇

Now then, although we don't have any obligation to save the unknown explorers, but it's some monsters after much pain. Let's make them into experience points for everyone.

"There are people who are running from the monsters this time, so let's fight to save them."

I propose to go to battle while using an appropriate reason. Everyone immediately replied with their consents.

"Of course, when you're not with me, you should run away at full speed and give maximum priority to your own life okay?"

Just in case, I gave them the warning.

We retreat to the path behind for a bit, and encamp ourselves on the ramp with piled-up debris where it's easy to fight many enemies. Here the rear guards should be able to send magic and long-ranged attack from behind by flying it over the head of the vanguards who are fighting.

The problems are that we can only see 50 meters ahead since the corridor is curved, and we can't lay traps on the passage since there are explorers who are running away toward here.

As an insurance, I invoke [Remote Arrows] and hide them in the shadow of the ceiling. Of course I've properly restrained myself and only created no more than 30.

◇

A party that consist of rabbitkins and ratkins are running from beyond the corridor like literal startled hares. Behind them are party of male humans, and the last in line are a party of female humans, and baggage carriers children, although they still can't be seen.

"Run!"

"Oy you guys, group of monsters are coming y'know."
"If you don't want to get eaten, don't be confused and just run!"

The demi-humans party give unanimous warnings to run while they're passing us on the side. The three of them are level 7-10 warriors.

Next, only three people of the male humans party are explorers, the two men with good physique who follow them are baggage carriers. Those two seem to be slaves.

"Oy, you slaves, if you drop the jar of ant nectar, I'll cut you bastard's limbs and feed them to the ants."

The slaves don't answer to the merciless men and keep running after the men in silence. The explorer man who's rebuking them is level 13, the highest among this group. The two slaves are only level 4.

"Besso. Those『Beautiful Wing』have fallen behind."
"Fuhn, it's too bad with Jenna, but we won't be in the red if we have a jar."
"You're right, let's run while they're getting eaten."

They only glanced to us, and passed by from the side.

The party of female explorers are coming way later after those two groups. Among the four, two are explorers, while the remaining two are baggage carriers. One of the carriers seems to be injured on her leg, and the other one is leading her by hand to somehow pull her.

"You people over there! Run! There's an outbreak of labyrinth ants."

Although the way of talk is like a man, she's a woman. She's in her early 20s, and although she's not a beauty, her face has a certain charm to it. She has a short wooden spear with bronze tip and a wooden shield, she wears an armor that's cotton clothes sewn with woods. I wonder if that armor is popular in the labyrinth city?

"Do you guys have a smoke ball or a flash ball? You'd get caught up."

The other one is a 20 years old beauty-san. Her breasts are slightly bigger than Lulu's, she's a calm looking person with black hair that's bundled on the back. Her name is Jenna-san.

Unfortunately, we don't have the item that she's asking. The fireworks magic can probably act in their place, but it's faster to just use firebolt to burn the ants rather than using that.

The two looked behind beside us and held their breaths toward the baggage carriers behind.

"Iruna-san, help! The ants! The ants!"
"Onee-chan, I'm fine already, onee-chan should escape alone."

The labyrinth ants that are as big as a human are chasing the two who are displaying sisterly

love from behind.

I signal to Pochi and Tama.

"Ey."
"Yah."

The stones that the two have thrown get a clean hit on the ant that's going to bite the carrier sisters. The ant who has lost its balance tumbles to the ground and entangles its legs with the other ants. About 30 ants also tumble to the ground in series, and the rush stops. The remaining 270 ants haven't arrived yet.
Of course the serial tumbles are not coincidence. I secretly use [Magic Hand] on the labyrinth ants' legs to tumble them over.

I nod to Liza who's looking at me.

"Nana, provoke them. Rear guards, begin the shooting."

Arisa, Mia, and Lulu; the rear guard prepare the usual Soft Shotguns on the safety zone that is on the top of the ramp.

"You worker ants! I'm telling you to overwork yourselves to death!"

Nana's provocation is working, the ants hostilities turn here--that's fine and all, but please stop with the overwork to death part since it hurts my heart.

After the provocation, the three shot the labyrinth ants with the soft shotguns. Since they're originally weapons for suppressing humans, it give almost no damage.

"Pochi, Tama, let's go."
"Assent~?"
"Acknowledged nanodesu!"

Liza assaults while leaving the usual red afterglows from her magic spear. It's overwhelming that she tramples an ant with each of her blow.

Tama puts magic power into her two short magic swords, and defeats the labyrinth ants in flutters like she's dancing. Against small fries like these, the dual-wielding Tama is the fastest in decimating them.

Pochi has also gotten used to putting magic power into a magic sword, she moves linearly while accurately aims her short magic sword to the gaps on the labyrinth ant's shell, defeating them.

Nana deals with the ants that have gathered from her provocation by using shield bash with her magic sword and great shield. Her strength has been increased by physical reinforcement, she's moving with the goal to push the ants back rather than to defeat them. She's probably learned this way of fighting in the Spriggan trial grounds.

Since the labyrinth ants are only around level 4-6, it seems to be unsatisfactory.

"Amazing, they're easily defeating those hard labyrinth ants."
"The magic earlier might have weakened the ants' defenses."

The two female explorers lend their shoulders to the carrier sisters and carry them here. At first Liza was going to help them, but it looks like she's judged that assistance is unnecessary. Looks like they see the shotgun attacks earlier as magic. Of course the shotguns don't have defense down effect or anything like that.

"We're saved, noble-sama."

The charming-san who seems to be the female explorers party leader talks to me. We're in the middle of battle, but since there's enough room for it, it's fine. Moreover, I want to ask something. For some reason, everyone who has met me sees through me as a noble in one glance. I want to know the reason.

"Don't mind it. Rather, can I ask something."
"O, of course, I will absolutely reward you when we get back to the town."
"No, you don't have to do that, how do you know that I'm a noble?"

The female explorers look slightly awkward, but then, the charming-san who's called Iruna answers my question. The beauty-san is treating the baggage carrier little sister who has hurt her leg. The baggage on the big sister carrier's back seems to be heavy as she's kneeling on the ground while trying to adjust her breathing and isn't looking around her.

"Because, you're wearing such high-class robe in a labyrinth like this."

I see, so it's the problem with clothes. However, I think it's normal for a magician to wear robe.

"Moreover, you're hanging such expensive looking sword on your waist."

Even though I've properly arranged Nana's and the others' magic swords with plain scabbards, I forgot my own sword.

"Moreover."

There's still more huh.

"Only nobles-sama bring those, maid-san in their dresses, into the labyrinth."

Ah, I've overlooked it since those are their usual attires.
Lulu is wearing maid uniform, and Arisa is cosplaying [Combat Maid] uniform which I've made after getting carried away. Those were equipment that I presented them when they were doing the Spriggan trials.

Their defense powers are higher than even the metal armors that knights wear you know?

While we're having such out of place conversation, Liza and the others are resolutely exterminating the enemies. The rear guard troupe are free after the first attack since they're completely safe.

Part 9 - Labyrinth Exploration (3)

Satou's here. I've done some explorations in dungeon-exploring game without preparation before, but in real life, the problem with food and water is real and loom over you. Though in the other world, the problem of drinking water can be solved with magic.

◇

There are only 10 Labyrinth Ants (Maze Ants) now from the 32 ants before. Halfway through, some ants that Nana had failed to handle almost surrounded Pochi and Tama, but Arisa and Mia supported with magic from the rear and managed to avoid further problem.

"Tama! I'll make a wall on the left, so attack from the right. Right is the direction with the fork!"
"Aye~"

Arisa's magic, [Isolation Wall (Deracinator)] is particularly effective. Looks like the more advanced version of this magic, [Maze (Labyrinth)] can create isolation walls that form a maze which arbitrary lock enemies within. It seems the magic power consumption for that is quite large, but she's said to me that she'd like to try it when the trailing ants have caught up.

The female explorers party whom we have saved earlier are still around. After those girls understood that assistance is unnecessary, they begun to intently watch the vanguard's battle. Judging from the words of admirations that occasionally leak out of them, they're probably fascinated.

Although the main body of the ants swarm won't be arriving in another 10 minutes, a group of ants are closing in to here from the monster-only passages that connect to this corridor. It's a group with little over 20 ants.

"Rustlerustle~?"
"There are sounds coming from the other side of the wall nodesu!"

Looks like Tama and Pochi have detected the crawling ants in the wall while they're fighting. They've done well to do that while having such intense battle.

"Satou, sign monument."

I look at the place where Mia points from atop of the ramp, the light is flashing red and blue like it's going violet. I wonder if it's reacting to the enemies who are coming from the other side of the passage?

"Noble-sama, that's the sign of the gushing holes creation. Monsters will come out of those holes."

The leader of the female explorer party warned me so.

It's not from the main battlefield of Liza and the others, but around the sign monument behind us. The passage wall that look like stone wall in a glance is thinning out like mucous membrane, turning into small passages.

Now then, I guess I should take care of this one. I draw out the fairy sword and cut the ants that gush out of the wall in half with a single stroke of the sword. I took care as not to cut the magic cores in half.

A small passage has also been created behind the female explorers, and an ant is crawling out of it. I warn them about it since they don't seem to notice it.

"You there, behind you."
"Eh? There's a gushing hole here too! Jenna, let's do it."
"Yes. You two, please get away."

The carrier sisters follow Jenna's words and withdraw to the back.
About this female explorers party, [Beautiful Wings], Iruna the leader is level 8, and Jenna the beauty-san is level 6. The crawling ant is level 5, so they should be able to easily win.

Or so I thought, but they're having a hard fight.
They thrust their short spears while blocking the ant's attacks with their shields, but the ant's outer shell repels the attacks, and they don't seem to give it real damage. They should have aimed for the gaps on the shell like Pochi and Tama do.

Since the ant was showing a sign of attacking with acid toward the beauty-san, I picked up an ant's claw from the remain below my feet, and threw it to the ant's neck to disturb it.

I took out a tongs from the bag, used it to pick up magic cores, putting it into a small bag.

Liza and the others' fights seem to be over soon too. When I looked back at the female explorers after finishing collecting magic cores, they were still in the middle of attacking and defending against the ant, so even though it might be meddlesome of me, I cut the neck of the hissing ant, ending the battle. This much should be normal for a level 30 magic sword user.

I reply the girls' thanks by lightly waving my hand, and then head toward Liza and the others who have finished their battle.

"Master, should I commence the materials collecting?"
"Just the magic cores is alright. The ant's shell is soft after all, so there is no use for that."
"Master, the shell should be usable for making armors or weapons. I believe that the claw should be better suited for daggers or sickles rather than spears since it's slightly curved."

It seems that in Liza's hometown, materials from ant monsters are highly valued for making tools.
Although it's weak enough to be broken by normal iron swords, it seems that there aren't enough material for making equipments since the people here even use wood chips for armors, I guess it might be good if we bring the ant materials to the above ground?

"Meat~?"
"We won't have meat festival nodesu?"
"Let's not. Ant's meat is bitter and it's not delicious. There are some cases where children get food poisoning when they eat it too."

Food poisoning is scary.
I feel sorry for Pochi and Tama who look disappointed, but I'll treat them to some meals that I've stored in the Storage later, so please put up with baked sweets and water for now.

◇

"Noble-sama, here it is."
"Isn't that from the one you two have defeated? If it's for reward, your words from earlier are already enough."

Iruna the female explorer presented a magic core that seemed to have been taken from the ant, but I pushed her hand back.

"Rather than that, you should escape soon. My companion's magic has caught wind of a swarm of maze ants coming here. They will get here in less than a quarter of half an hour."
"Noble-sama won't run?"
"We'll escape after we've appropriately kept them."

I implicitly said that it would be better for us if you escape. The female explorers finally sluggishly got up and begun to escape. I catch sight of the ant nectar jar that the older sister carrier carries on her back. The ants might be chasing after that unexpectedly.

Now then, more than that, let's prepare for the next battle.
I gather everyone and replenish their magic power with [Magic Power Transfer (Transfer)]. It's quicker than using magic recovery potion, and above all, it's free.

While I'm at it, I use [Soft Wash], and [Dry] to cleanly wash off the ant's blood.

"Then, I'll set up the『Maze(Labyrinth)』from here to the corner over there okay."
"Can you make wall that won't let them pass but let our attack pass?"
"Nn~ I do have『Isolation Cage <<Deracinator Jail>>』, but the enemies' attacks will also pass through it, so it's not suitable for enemies that use long-range attack you know?"
"No problem, first, everyone will attack with Soft Shotgun, and Mia will use『Water Screen』to block the enemies' acid attacks."
"Okay."
"Nn."

After the briefing is over, Arisa uses [<<Deracinator Jail>>] to create a lattice. Since it's radiating dim light, I can see the shape of the lattice. Stabs and shots can pass through it, but slashing attacks will probably be stopped by the lattice.

I set up [<<Flexible Shield>>] just in case. It's an insurance for when some acid attacks that pass through the lattice can't be defended by Mia.

"They've come nodesu."
"Everyone take your position~?"

Everyone is readying their shotguns behind the impromptu defensive wall that's been created by piling up the ants' remains with cloth on top.
The large swarm of ants show up from the corner and rush here while resounding their hard legs' footsteps. It's quite intense even though we have the magic lattice. Mia and Lulu have leaned to me on both sides, looks like they're scared. I pat their heads to sweep their worries away.

"Wait a bit more."

The ants vanguard crash into the isolation cage, scattering their bodily fluids. Looks like the vanguard ants can't stand the weight of their friends behind, their health have been greatly reduced. There are black insects squiggling in front of the lattice, it's become a sorry sight.

After waiting for around five minutes, all the ants have gathered in this corridor.

"Shoot!"
"Roger~" "Nanodesu!"

By my command, the seven gun muzzles incessantly rain down countless buckshots. I secretly adjust everyone's muzzle with [Magic Hands] to make it hit as many enemies as possible.

"Nana, Pochi, Tama, put down the gun. Prepare for close combat."

The shootings are finished, and Arisa invokes [Maze(Labyrinth)].
Afterwards, the monster extermination process is as simple as the vanguard defeating ants and then Arisa lets out some other ants. Nana and Pochi sometimes got caught with the ant's attack, but their armor and mantle kept them from taking damage.

The vanguard aren't the only ones busy, the rear guard is also busy. Looks like managing the maze is hard for Arisa. Too many enemies have gathered on one section of the maze, so she's adjusting the maze's path. Mia is working hard to follow up with [Bind Mist] when there are too many enemies, and [Blind Mist] to decrease the enemies' accuracies.

I'm free since I'm only watching everyone, so I use [Magic Hands] to gather the defeated ants alongside the wall.

Since Lulu doesn't have anything to do after shooting the shotgun in the first attack, she's begun to retrieve the magic cores of the ants I've gathered. She's not only wearing mittens, but also an apron and a hood so her hair and clothes won't get dirty while working. I told her to be careful about the acid gland on the ant's mouth so she wouldn't get burned.

After they've defeated around half of the enemies, the vanguards look very tired so it's better if they take a short break I guess?

"Arisa, I want to let the vanguards rest. Do you have enough magic power to maintain the maze?"
"Okay, it'll be dangerous if they become lightheaded after all. I can reduce magic power consumption if I only need to maintain the maze state, so it's alright if I just drink some MP recovery potion later."
"Alright, then let's take a break after they've defeated the enemies they're currently fighting."
"Ho~i."

Pochi and Tama vigorously said, "Not yet~" and "I can do it nodesu!", but they were visibly staggering, so I made them drink water and sandwiches with salted ham and a lot of mayonnaise.

Since everyone is young, they have become like different people just after taking a break and napping shortly for 30 minutes after the meal. Arisa has recovered her magic power after a bottle of MP recovery potion and [Magic Power Transfer], so the second round begins.

It seems that the ants who didn't come here were rioting all over the first area of the labyrinth, but the female explorers party from before had safely got out of the labyrinth.

After the ants have been completely exterminated, Pochi and Tama fall down from depleting their stamina, but since their faces look like they've fully accomplished something, I consider it a good thing.

Since Liza and Nana were also totally exhausted, I decided to rest on the temporary camp at the higher ground where Arisa and the others were positioned. Everyone seems to be really tired as they sleep like a log, I keep the night watch with Lulu.

Nevertheless, everyone has leveled up in one day.
Labyrinths are quite efficient after all.

Author's note: Mia and Lulu have leveled up by one, while everyone else by two levels.

Part 10 - Labyrinth Exploration (4)

Satou's here. When I'm engrossed with something, I often forget the time. Like when an MMO got a new version, I stockpiled two days worth of food and engrossed myself with the game.

◇

"Nana! Endure it for a while. Pochi, Tama, use Magic Edge! Let's settle it in one go."
"You ivy! Are you a plant or an animal, be clear about it, so I complain!"
"Magic Edge~" "Go~ nanodesu!"

With Nana's provocation, the Thorn Foot rushes by crawling with its octopus-like ivies toward Nana, and entangles her body. She quickly cuts the ivies with her nature magic Sharp Edge-strengthened magic sword, so the ivies don't have any chance to twine around her. Geez, I'd have liked if it was a bit more erotic.

While my mind is in another place, Pochi and Tama cuts the main ivy that's connected to a giant thorn with their magic edged magic swords.

Arisa pierced the bump part of the Thorn Foot's head with her [<<Dimension Cutter>>], severing half of the bump.

Lulu who's beside her fires a big caliber magic bullet from her magic gun, completely blowing away the half-torn bump of the Thorn Foot.

There, Mia demonstrates the effect of [<<Water Shredder>>], shredding the monster's rind by making use of the body fluids that flow on its surface.

Lastly, Liza drives her magic edged Spiral Spear Attack on the legs-like ivies of the Thorn Foot, finishing it off.

"Big victory~?" "Nanodesu!"

I clean everyone who's raising cheers of victory with life magic and heal them in one go with [Aqua Heal]. I leave it to Mia to heal injuries during battles, but it's my job to heal injuries after the battle is over.

They were fighting against a level 30 Thorn Foot this time, but they were able to reliably beat it.

This is the area 1-4-9-17 that's overflowing with plant-type monsters. The name seems to be like this since the place you end up in can differ even if you're in the same area depending on the course you've passed through. Since it's long, let's just call it area 17. In here, plant roots that are hanging on every room emit light so it's bright. I tried cutting those plant roots before since I was curious, there were light fiber-like things in its cross-section. The natural light fiber roots and stalks must have brought the light from outside.

Due to that reason, there are a lot of plant-type monsters in this area. Various enemies have attacked us, like the walking ivy monster like before, a big tree monster which fires durian-sized acorns from its cannon-like part, a walking corn monster that rapidly fires its thumb-sized kernels like a machine-gun, or carnivorous plants that send out their slime-like mucus feelers to predate upon us. Any one of them is around level 20-30.

One interesting monster is called [Walking Bamboo (Ugi)], they look exactly like a bamboo. You can extract green-tea colored sugar by processing the fiber of this monster's main body. Furthermore, its leaves are raw material for potion stabilizer. The ivy of this Walking Bamboo (Ugi) and the Thorn Foot that we've just hunted now are material for making intermediate potion. Since the ivy would start to contain toxic after it's left to decompose for a few days, I compounded it by following the instruction on the documents of the elf alchemist.

I can see demi-goblins and herbivore monsters sometimes, but since low-leveled monsters are just a hindrance, I exterminate them with Remote Arrows.

There is no one in this area besides us, partly because area 9 is infested with small insect monsters and slime monsters that especially use poison, disease and paralyze inducing attacks, on top of the area being a traps heaven. It seems that even for the past explorers, hardly any have come to this area, there are only around 20% of the sign monument compared to the other areas.

◇

"Alrighttt! I did it! I've leveled up to 27 from just now!"
"Nyahaha~?"
"Did it nodesu!"
"Self-conceit is prohibited. This is the result of master being here."
"Affirmative. It is thanks to master."
"Of course I feel thankful. Other enemies don't come when we're hunting one, and convenient enemies quickly come right after the break, it's a program that will even freak out an efficiency freak."

I take no notice to Arisa's subtly impolite praise.
We walked slightly further in since the enemies were too weak in area 1-4 where we fight the ant in the beginning as it wouldn't have become a training for everyone. Thanks to the suitably strong enemies in this area 17, it has become an efficient level up training. I'm concerned with Arisa who was lacking in stamina, but according to the person herself, it was because she had raised her stat to be oriented toward being a magician. During the (stat) adjustment on level up, she had raised (her other stats) to be at standard level so she had somehow resolved it. I'm quite envious that she can arbitrary allocate her stat points.

Since this place (the labyrinth) has night and day cycle, and the ground looks like bare soil, it doesn't feel like underground. Moreover, there are water sources, and the air don't get muddied even if we cook since there are air vents high on the ceiling. It's probably the best place for camping and hunting.

Since I could easily split groups of monsters by using earth magic to control the bare soil, it was easy to make only one monster could fought everyone at a time. The reason why Arisa didn't use her space magic to split monsters was because it seemed hard for her to use space attack magic while fighting against higher-leveled enemies.

"Come to think of it, a few days have passed already, is it alright for us not to return to the city yet?"
"We have a lot of water and food, so it's fine isn't it?"

Four days have already passed. We've only raised 2-3 levels each day, but since we've leveled more than 10 levels since our entry, the result is quite good.

The big one is particularly Lulu who has gained life magic and nature magic skills, and Mia who has acquired Spirit magic skill.

Arisa has also acquired fire magic skill when she's gotten her space magic skill to level 8. Apparently, the required point to level up to level 9 and more was too large, it almost made her heart broke she got something else. She picked fire magic that's good in battle since she could use advanced level magic the way she is now.

According to Arisa, body reinforcement magic of fire magic creates the energy by burning fat in your body, so it's good for diet. She boasted that it was something that the elves had taught her.

As far as my analysis goes, it uses nothing but magic power so the body fat things must be the elves' joke. I failed to mention it to her since she looked too happy, but I have to tell Arisa before she begin overeating.

◇

Since we had already annihilated all the enemies in this hall, we went toward the log house that we had been using for the last four days in order for having dinner.

The log house that was made from plant-type monster materials originally only had a living room, but it was added with more rooms and got improved little by little every day. Right now it has become like a villa which has a living room, a dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a workshop.

We're growing tomatoes and medicinal plants on the patch of soil in front of the villa. Let's plant all sort of plants like flowers, soy beans and potatoes the next time we come here.

This hall is located in a place where there are watering hole and air holes, gushing holes can't be formed here. There are three passages on this hall, but I've put up doors with magic keys on each end of the passages, and left threefold traps there. Since even Tama has given up canceling the traps halfway through it, it's probably enough for preventing crime. I've made it to be able to be unsealed with authentication magic tools and passwords since it would be troublesome to go in-and-out otherwise. I've included simple version of barrier pillars on the doors in order to prevent bodiless-type monsters intrude.

"I'm home."

We enter the log house while unanimously saying so. This log house is installed with scarecrow series surveillance mechanism that will send alarm [Signal] when they discover an intruder. There are abundance of mana in the labyrinth, so I made use of the jellyfish's feelers to gather mana for the magic power needed to power the surveillance and alarm mechanisms.

I think the doors and the traps from earlier are enough, but just in case.

"The hot water have been boiled."
"Yeah, I'm going."

Since Arisa has called, I put the blueprints of the bronze Living Armor for guarding this villa on top of the sheet, and head to the bathroom.

Recently, Arisa who has learned the fire magic does the heating. At first the bathroom was partially destroyed by fire since she made a mistake during the heating adjustment, but she's become able to reliably do it now.

"Everyone is already waiting, undress quick quick~"

Since it was troublesome to make the changing room, undressing is done in the living room. Everyone will get caught up in Arisa's bad influence if I'm too tardy, so I use quickdress to change into waist coiled with towel style and enter the bathroom.

Everyone who's in one-piece yukata like Arisa's wearing is waiting in front of the bathtub that's made of cypress-like wood. I don't think that I must be the first one to enter, but since Liza and Nana were insisting, "The first bath is for master.", me entering first has become the custom.

After Liza and Nana pour hot water from both of my sides, I set foot into the bathtub. I slowly lean my back on the bathtub's edge, and relax my mind and body with the hot water that feels just right.

There are a lot of spirits in the watering hole here. I don't know whether it's because they're the prey of the monsters, or simply because it's the gushing point of an earth vein. Just by submerging in the hot water, I feel that my body feels light like it's being massaged, the spirits might be massaging me unexpectedly.

While I warm my body, I'm washing the back and hair of the youth troupe besides Arisa. I also washed Lulu and Arisa before, but Lulu had become so red it looked like she was going to faint, and Arisa was too excited she got a nosebleed and fainted, so they get left out.

Since Mia who has won the janken for the first player is already waiting with a shampoo hat, I quickly bubble her hair with the shampoo soap. This shampoo soap is something from the recipe I've learned from the elf hometown alchemist, Tsuya-shi. It's not as good as the shampoo from my former world, but it produces more bubbles than a normal soap and it's

tender for scalps. I made the shampoo hat for Pochi, but for some reason, Mia and Nana also have become to like it.

After washing the hair of the little girls in turn, I warm up my chilly body in the hot water and count to 100 with Pochi and the others, and then we get out of the bath. I tried not to be captivated by Nana who had her yukata become slightly transparent from the hot water, but it was quite hard.

◇

"I'm thinking of going back to the above ground tomorrow morning."
"Eh~, let's get back after we've leveled up to 30."
"I'd very much like to, but I've only paid the inn for five days, so if we don't go back tomorrow, our carriage and horses would be sold off you know."

I persuade Arisa, the only person who's complaining, by telling her the reason to go back. Putting aside the carriage, I feel sorry if the horses get sold off. The horses are our companions who have accompanied us in the long journey after all.

"Moreover, we can instantly go back here if we leave the carved seal board right?"

That words seemed to be the decisive factor, succeeded persuading Arisa.

Before we go back, I choose the booty we're going to take above ground.

Among the magic cores, I decided to put the large quantity of deep red magic cores acquired from area 17 inside the Magic Bag <<Holding Bag>>, and left it in the log house. I've already used large amount of the small whitish magic cores from the ants and small fries for making diluted magic potions, but there are still more than 100 of it remaining. I put only these magic cores into a small bag and bring them along.

Since everyone will look at us dubiously instead if we don't bring any monster material, I've decided to bring 10 of the ant's breast shells, carapaces and claws each that are in acceptable conditions, and also some labyrinth frog meat. Every one of them had been in the purchase list of the guild.

I remembered something and decided to bring some yellow lizard meat that weren't in the purchase list. They were strange lizards that looked like an iguana with feelers, but they were delicious with chicken-like taste and little fatness.

◇

With [Return] magic, we return to the hidden room in area 1-4 that we've found. Of course I had made sure that there were no monsters or explorers in the room beforehand with [Clairvoyance] magic. Making sure of the situation ahead for teleporting is simpler with this magic, so I use it often recently.

Since I discovered around 30 lost thieves that were approaching like they were enclosing us

when we were in a junction of the first area, I dealt with them with three consecutive [Remote Stuns] before they were even in our field of visions. They probably won't die, but since I hit them with 2-5 shoots each, they're probably going to be fainting in agony for a while.

Since I took some detours by using some small passages along the way, we safely got out of the labyrinth without even encountering the fainted lost thieves.

We were meet with a surprise outside of the labyrinth, but the surprising vector seemed to be slightly different than what Arisa had expected.

Part 11 - The Value of Safe Return

Satou's here. In my primary school days during my visit to my grandfather's house, I took part searching a mountain where a neighbor middle school kid was believed to be spirited away. I can still remember the serious faces of the adults back then even now. That middle school kid seemed to have been playing in the city, and they scolded the kid harshly afterward.

◇

"Should we head back immediately after we have renewed the inn booking?"
"We can't nanodesu!"
"Ara? Didn't you say『I belong to the battlefields』?"
"Walking the horses~" "Nanodesu!"
"Eh~, they're just horses, we can just ask the inn caretaker to do that."
"No good no good~?"
"Arisa doesn't understand nodesu."
"Nn."

I take no notice to the little girls' conversation as my mind is occupied with the thing that's happening on the first hall just ahead the passage.
There are nearly 200 knights in full equipments like they're going on a march. I wonder if they're on a mission to save an important person? Since there are people like a foreign country prince and the youngster an earl house inside the labyrinth, their target might be among them.

Arisa who was running out of breath when she was descending this stair has become able to calmly climb it while conversing. Level ups are great after all.

We enter into the labyrinth gate that Pochi and Tama have opened, going outside of the labyrinth.

There, I see the face of someone whom I didn't expect to find here.

"Viscount Shimen! It has been a while."
"Ooh! Chevalier Pendragon, so you're safe!"

I can guess the current situation while being surprised by the calm older brother of Toruma who's suddenly hugged me. I affirmed that after hearing Toruma-brother's story.

It started from the rumor about some half-destroyed explorers who acquired ant nectar that he heard in a noble-only saloon when Toruma-brother was visiting the labyrinth city to get a hold of rare magic cores the day before yesterday.

When he asked about the detail, he heard that the explorers were saved by a black haired young noble who had an excellent mithril sword and brought along little beastkin girls, and a magic spear-user lizardkin girl, he seemed to have associated them to be about me.

Then, he asked the Explorer Guild about it just in case, and the fact that we had become explorers, went to the labyrinth and had not come back yet came to the light.

At first he requested the Explorer Guild rescue unit to be deployed, but since they persisted that they couldn't dispatch it before the scheduled date of our return had passed, it wasn't going well. Good going Explorer Guild. If they had dispatched yesterday, it would have made many things complicated.

Therefore, he directly talked to the General of Labyrinth Army, borrowed some elites to form a rescue unit, and asked some explorers to become the guide. The viscount himself wouldn't be going into the labyrinth of course, but he purposely came here since he's acquainted with the captain of the unit.

"I'm very sorry for making you worry."
"No, judging from your conditions, I've jumped to the wrong conclusion myself. I'm sorry for making this commotion."
"I already said right, against a magic warrior who can repulse a lower demon, even if the first four area monsters ganged up on him, they wouldn't even nick him."

The knight captain who's wearing a full body armor entered the conversation by saying so. This person seems to be a honorary viscount. Toruma-brother has come to an agreement to deliver some barrels of wine and five sheep to the soldier barrack. I will apologize to the General together with Toruma-brother tomorrow. He told me that I didn't have to go, but as an adult myself, I couldn't exactly say, "Oh is that so.".

The knights seem to be going to eliminate the lost thieves since they've made preparations and all. It's just right since the ones I've knocked down should be still there.

Toruma-brother seemed to be busy, he left a subordinate to deal with the trivial after promising about the tomorrow matter.
The subordinate-san is a 40 years old man with good physique. I wish it was a beautiful female secretary instead.

◇

After parting with Toruma-brother, we go to the purchasing counter of the guild staffs before the labyrinth gate.

"Congratulations on your safe return."
"Thank you."

Congratulations?
I feel that there's something wrong with that, but since it seems like she's blessing me, I thank her.

"How was the result?"
"We've got magic cores, labyrinth ant's materials, and labyrinth frog's meat."

I take them out of the satchel. I purposely did it like this to leave an impression that we are in the possession of a magic bag <<Holding Bag>>. It's better than having them suspiciously think that we have Item Box.

I take out more than 100 magic cores, 10 of ant's breast shell, carapaces, and claws each, and 100 kilograms of labyrinth frog meat.

"T, that's a lot of magic cores."

Just as Arisa's expected, the face of the guild female receptionist is cramping. It seems to be within common sense as it's not enough to create a commotion.
I think it's actually unexceptional considering our levels, but maybe it's unprecedented for first-time explorers since the guild have onlye information about their names. I'm really glad that I've left the magic cores we've acquired from stronger monsters on the campground.

"Are these all Chevalier Pendragon-sama?"
"No, although I don't know if they have purchase request, I have the meat of strange yellow lizard."

I already knew that it had no purchase request, but since the meat is delicious, I've brought it to treat the children who are standing by here. There are only 20 kilograms of the meat, but it should be enough to treat them.

"Strange yellow lizard? Is it that legendary ingredients?!"
"Oy, Huey. Appraise this meat. It seems to be of the yellow strange lizard."
"Is that true. You've done well to defeat such fast running lizard."

Come to think of it, it was trying to run away from Tama's surprise attack, so I caught it with [Magic Hand]. I had thought that its price was too high, so it was a rare ingredient huh. I ask about the prices of the other things while they're appraising it.

The labyrinth frog meat is worth four copper coins a kilogram, so 100 kilograms are four gold coins.

The ant's breast shell is two silver coins, and the carapace is one silver coin. I think the carapace can be used for many things, is there a few demand for it? The ant's claw is quite cheap, 10 of them are one silver coin. It's two copper coins a piece.

"It's the strange yellow lizard without a doubt. It's 10 gold coins if you sell it to the guild. You can possibly sell it higher if you bring it to the city, but in that case, the tax for carrying out will be one gold coin."

I don't particularly need to pay the tax since it can be deducted from the materials and magic cores I'm selling it. Since the market price is 20 gold coins, it's more profitable to sell it in the city even if I have to pay the tax.

As for the magic cores, each one of the 103 magic cores of the labyrinth ants is one copper coin, the strange yellow lizard's core is one silver coin, and the labyrinth frog's core is two

silver coins.
The staff-san teaches me how to break down the price of the magic cores.

"These lots of small magic cores are White 9 and Vermilion 1 so they're of the lowest grade. Please note that it's the lowest priced core since there is little use of this low-ranked magic core."

I asked her to teach me the detail of magic core grades.

It seems that the deeper the red color of the magic core is, the better.
There are four colors classifications which are White, Vermilion, Red and Crimson, [White 9 Vermilion 1] to [Vermilion 10] are the low grade, [Vermilion 9 Red 1] to [Red 10] are the intermediate grade, [Red 9 Crimson 1] to [Crimson 10] are the high grade, and above it is the highest grade, [Blood Crimson].

Since the level 30 frog is [White 7 Vermilion 3], while the level 15 lizard is [White 2 Vermilion 8], it doesn't seem that being higher leveled means that the magic core will be better. By the way, the whales' cores are Deep Crimson. I don't have any intention of selling it, but I'm slightly interested just how much is that giant magic core worth.

Since the price of the magic cores doesn't depend on quantity but its grade and weight, the staff-san politely measures it one by one while wiping them. There's a magic tool for this measurement, it calculates the price after you set the value standard on the ballast. It's quite an excellent thing.

However, she's implying that the [White 9 Vermilion 1] magic cores don't have any use, but I've used it normally for making diluted potions, I wonder if there are individual differences?
The guild staff breaks down the total and shows the written blackboard to me.
I've decreased the labyrinth meat I'm going to sell by 20 kilograms.

"Do you agree with this amount of money for the purchase?"
"Yes, good enough."

The deal has been made, and I receive the documents needed for us to rank up from Wood plates to the Bronze plates from the guild-san. Strangely, they don't check whether I'm carrying something out. I wonder if the checking is lax?

I got permission from the guild staffs to borrow the BBQ stove beside the counter. It seems that they're loaning the set and the fuel for one big copper coin.

◇

"Noble-sama, so you're safe!"
"I'm glad!"

The two people from the [Beautiful Wings] called and hugged me. The women seemed to have thought that we were defeated and abducted by the ants. Putting aside the muscle body of charming-san, the soft embrace of the beauty-san is very wonderful.

Since Lulu who's grilling some frog meat is looking here with a complex expression of surprise and reproach, I gently pull the two apart. Arisa and the others were busy ordering the children to line up, so they didn't notice it. It seems I've avoided the guilty festival.

"I'm glad that you two are also alright."
"It's thanks to noble-sama."
"We were really saved by you."

These girls seem to be the explorers who were going to guide the rescue unit. Apparently they received a fine for not only causing trouble for other explorers, but also the labyrinth army. The fine was expensive, so the prize money they got from the quest weren't enough. They were being vague about it, but they probably borrowed money to cover the deficiency.

The children who are treated with grilled meat on wooden skewers come to me to say their thanks, and then get back near the wall to enjoy the food. Arisa had specially told them that I was the one who treated them while she was distributing the meat. Everyone seems to be experienced from the food distribution at the duchy capital, the children line up while keeping the order.

The beastkin girls ate the little of meat that had remained. You girls, haven't you each just eaten 10 kilograms of the meat yesterday?

Part 12 - Courtesy Calls

Satou's here. Even though I've forgotten about it after I got used to internet payments, formalities are something that take time. Although I understand that it's necessary, it still makes me impatient.

◇

"Heya, I'd like to extend my booking period, is it alright?"
"I-if it isn't Chevalier Pendragon-sama. We're glad to see you're fine, w-w-we can extend the period yes. I'm very sorry, but we're going to clean your room, so please relax yourself in the lobby for a while. Of course we won't charge you the admission fee.

How do I say this, the inn owner looks suspicious.
Right at that time, Pochi and Tama who have gone to see the horses come back.

"The horses aren't here~?"
"The carriage isn't here too nodesu."

Hohou?
Glint, Arisa's and Liza's look toward the inn owner. I'm smiling like a Japanese person would.

"T-the horses are currently being let to exercise on the ranch. Since the carriage was dirty, it's being cleaned in a studio that usually deals with high-class carriages. Of course they're free since it's our inn's service."

I see, he secretly sold them since he thought I had died huh?

"Hou? That carriage is something that I've ordered from the master craftsman in the duchy capital, it worths no less than 200 gold coins. It's not a studio that would damage or peel the paint is it?"
"Y, yes. Of course it is not."

Let's claim 200 gold coins if the paint really gets chipped. That's the actual market price after all.

"Liza, Nana, I'm worried about it so could you go and see the carriage?"
"N, no, you don't need to do that. Everyone must be tired since you all have just got back from the labyrinth. We have just acquired some good lambs, so how about some meal. We'll pick up the horses and the carriage from the store, so please wait for it while you're having the meal, that, er..."

How do I say this, he's too small time. So small I can't imagine he's the owner of this high-class inn. Maybe he's the son-in-law taken by the family, and thus wanted some small sum of money?

"Everyone, the inn owner-dono will treat us to a meal, thank him properly."

I'll make him treat us with plenty of lamb dishes as the compensation for his trick. That much should be fine. The youth troupe thank him unconcernedly. I'm not sure if the owner thinks that his trick has been found out or if he's successfully deceived me, but he honestly treat us with dishes.

The horses and the carriage were safely returned to the inn when we had finished our meal. I guess I'll forgive him since he didn't try to change the horses. I'll treat the horses to some specially-made feed later.
Now then, even though the horses and the carriage have been returned, we still shouldn't stay in this inn for long. I've extended our booking period as intended, but I'll check the current condition of the Ivy Mansion before we dive into the labyrinth next time, and if it looks habitable enough, we'll probably move there.

◇

"What is the meaning of this, Heson! What's happened to my carriage! After overcharging it to 300 gold coins, now you're backing off from the deal, what is this."

There are people who don't know TPO out there huh.
I see, so my carriage was going to be sold at 300 gold coins huh. He seems to be quite excellent at overcharging people.

"Baronet Dyukeli-sama, that mistake happened--"

The inn owner draws closer to the old gentleman who looks like a wire. Urged by the landlady, we went to a passage guided by an employee.

I don't intend to thrust myself into an unnecessary trouble, so I come back to the room and take a rest with everyone. While being covered by little girls on the bed, I read the Toruma Memo in the menu.

It seems that he has investigated Baronet Dyukeli too, but as expected, even Toruma couldn't have personal connections with such faraway nobles, there are only two informations written, [A follower of Marquis Ashinen], and [Deals with Magic Tools].

However, there are slightly more detailed information written about the current viceroy of Selbira, Marquis Ashinen. Information that sound almost like he's badmouthing him; like how the previous generation had died unnaturally in the royal capital 20 years ago, or that the current marquis is stingy and like bribe money, or that he's a hen-pecked husband and arrogant.

It's written that Marquis Ashinen will soften his attitude toward someone who's brought him some expensive gift. Since it seems that it's better for the gift to be of the vulgar [Looks Expensive] kind rather than work of arts, let's present him with the gold nude woman statue I've acquired from my duchy capital acquaintance. Since that thing worths 20 gold coins, it should be enough. It's also written that he's into men, but since he likes the macho-type one, I should be safe as I'm outside his type.

I'll bring some presents for the wife too since it's said that he's a hen-pecked husband. According to Toruma Memo, she likes jewelries and confectionery, so I've decided to bring some jewelries I've got from the duchy capital, and some castella. Since hotcakes seem to be all the rage in the duchy capital right now, I choose a slightly different kind of castella.

I slip out of the bed after confirming that everyone has fallen asleep, and ask an inn employee to deliver a letter that contains my wish to meet face-to-face with the viceroy to his mansion. Since I'm scheduled to meet the Labyrinth Army General tomorrow afternoon, I've made an appointment to do this one the day after tomorrow.

◇

"My, you've already collected the needed magic cores quota?"
"Yes, this is the achievement proof I've received from the staff-san on the labyrinth entrance."
"Quite a wonderful result isn't it. Have you entered a labyrinth before?"
"Yes, another labyrinth for a bit."

I make which of the labyrinth vague. She seems to have asked about it casually too, she doesn't seem interested to ask which labyrinth it is.

"Well then, please wait on the sofa over there while for the person in charge that will guide you."

Pestered by Arisa and the others, we went to the east guild after breakfast to raise our rank to bronze. By the way, the breakfast were dried white breads, potage pumpkin soup, and scrambled eggs with thick sliced roasted bacons. The line-up somehow feels like something that have been influenced by a reincarnated person.

We've been guided to another room, and then we submit our IDs from Muno city, and sign the official registration deeds. I checked it with magic perception just in case, but there didn't seem to be any magic-related trap. We were offered to check our status and skills with Yamato stone free of charge for the rank up, but I refused since there was no need to do that particularly.

"What would you like for the party name?"

Everyone began to argue from the words of clerk-san. Since it didn't seem like it would be decided immediately, I asked the clerk-san some time.

"Chevalier Pendragon and His Mistresses."

Rejected.

"Pochi and Master."
"Ara, Pochi-chan, do you not like being together with us?"
"I-it's not like I don't like it nodesu. Pochi and Master and Tama and Liza and Lulu and Mia and Nana and Arisa is fine nodesu!"

"Long~?"

Lulu teases Pochi's verbal slip. She corrected it immediately, but just as Tama's said, it's too long.

"It should be more concise. How about Demon Lord Slayers?"
"Isn't that like a title?"

It'll be troublesome if there's someone who believes that, and most people will probably laugh at us for trying to be like heroes.

"Young Organism Protection Corps, so I recommend."
"Eh~, then we would be obliged to protect the little girls in front of the labyrinth."
"I'd like to at least protect them from starvation though."

Is there no organization or something that distribute food in this city?

"Chevalier Pendragon and His Pleasant Friends sounds nice."
"Lulu, you really are Arisa's big sister after all."
"Eh, Liza-san, what do you mean by that?!"

Looks like Lulu has been steadily dyed with Arisa's Showa power.

"Friends of Fairy."
"Well they are our friends and all~ But it doesn't sound like a party name~"

And, I guess Tama is the only one who hasn't stated her opinion?

"Nn~? Eat Meat Corps."
"Eat Hamburg Steak Corps."
"Eat Roasted Whole Bird Corps."
"Eat Chocolate Parfait Corps."

Isn't everyone just mentioning the thing they want to eat while pretending to suggest the party name? But, I'd like to eat chocolate as it's been awhile. I feel that I'd find it if I search around the southern archipelago.

I had a feeling that we wouldn't ever decide on it if it continued like this, so I registered my house name as the temporary one.

"Well then, it'll be complete in three days, so please use these temporary bronze plates until then."

Each of us receives a temp bronze plate that's carved with East-1~East-8.
The official bronze plate probably takes time to complete since it's carved with the owner's name and the party name.

◇

The General of the Labyrinth Army is a middle-aged man with hooked nose who's the very picture of someone from a noble family with his arrogant air. It's the younger brother of Duke Bishtall from back then, Honorary Earl Eltall.

After the greeting, we begin to apologize to him. For the time being, I've brought three kinds of smoked food and the dragon spring liquor as presents. I've also asked the inn to make the liquor store deliver several kinds of first-class liquor in barrels to the soldiers.

"Hou, so he's the outstanding talent who's carrying the future of Shiga kingdom huh?"

I harden a little from General Eltall's words.
I don't remember carrying that future you know?

"That's right. Thanks to him, Muno City which had become the breeding ground of demons was saved, and even the lower demon in Gururian city was destroyed with surprisingly low amount of victim.
His and his retainers' abilities are probably equal to first-class knights' prowesses.
And, in addition to his battle prowess, he's also well versed in magic. He single handedly developed various magic, including the beautiful『Fireworks』magic that captivated people's hearts.
Perhaps because of his personality, even among the factions that are spread in my lord's domain, I've never heard any disturbing rumor like assassination's attempt, thanks to his cooking and personality as the lubricants."

Please stop the excessive praises. Poker Face-san is dying.

Moreover, leaving aside the Barondom and Gururian city. What do you mean by lubricant? Have I done something? Let's ask the detail from the viscount later. Were there really factions in that carefree duchy capital.

"If you really can change someone with your cooking like that, I'd like you to do something to that Marquis Ashinen."
"He might be unexpectedly changed you know? His cooking has mediated that Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku after all."
"What! Those two who are like cats and dogs?"

Which Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku are they talking about again?
Is it about the predecessors? The two people that I know should be in a really friendly term. They were always smiling after all.

The boy page came while bringing the smoked meat that I had presented on a plate. He had prepared cups for several people. Don't tell me we're going to drink in the broad daylight?

Contrary to his appearance, General Eltall is an affable person.

"W, what's this liquor? Chevalier Pendragon, where did you get this liquor? It's the first time I've drunk this liquor."
"It tastes like Toruma's treasured liquor huh, so that liquor was really something you had

brought."

Let's fabricate some story since I can't exactly tell them that it's something summoned by the black dragon's magic.

"That is something I obtained from a merchant called Heiron in the trade port of the dukedom. I heard that it was liquor from some distant land, so perhaps it's from the archipelago or another continent."

I don't know whether it's because they comprehend that excuse, or because my Deception skill is at work, but it seems they've consented. The story flows, and I've been made to promise to give the two another dragon spring liquor later.

If I can get along with the military top position in the place where I'm staying with just one bottle of liquor in ton unit, I've got my money's worth.

Part 13 - Courtesy Calls (2)

Satou's here. If humans don't have an objective, or rather a purpose, they can't quite work hard at it. Too grand of an objective will break your heart though, so it might be better if you have the short and the long terms objectives.

◇

"My my, bringing such wonderful presents like these, Muno Barondom is quite rich isn't it."

The madam of Marquise Ashinen is looking at the presents from me that are in front of her, [Silk Cloth], [Sapphire Necklace], and [Coral Works] with great delight. I originally wanted to only give her the necklace, but since Arisa suggested that presents would be better if there were a lot, I slightly added it. The coral works especially, Viscount Shimen's secretary secretly advised me that they have a lot of variety on top of being rare in the inland, so it would be easy for the madam to give them to her servants.

I've packed the gold nude woman statue that's for Marquis Ashinen and handed it to the butler. It would have been sold to some merchant if I just gave it to the madam after all.

The madam of marquis Ashinen is an obese woman on her late 30s. It seems the couple have four daughters and two sons, though they're not here. The children are around 10-18 years old, two of the daughters have been married at the duchy capital, and the eldest son is working on the royal castle. Thanks to the madam's machine-gun talks, I acquired various information about the Marquis' house, nobles and the wealthy living in the labyrinth city. I don't feel particularly tired taking the role of a listener since I've gotten used to it during the tea parties in the duchy capital.

"Mother, did you call me?"
"Ara, you're late. How about her higness?"
"O madam! What do you want me for?"
"I'll introduce this person to your highness. He's--"

The two new people who have entered the room are the second 15 years old plump son of the marquis couple, and the foreign kingdom princess whom I saw when I was entering the labyrinth city. Unlike at that time, her hair is in proper drill twin tail style. The silver hair ornament suits her brown hair well. A maid-san with plain face who seems to be the princess attendant follows her from behind. I guess she's the fiancee of the marquis couple's second son.

With the madam's introduction, the second son snorted like he was looking down after hearing my peerage.

"Fuhn, what, he's just a honorary chevalier huh. Making me to specially greet a sham noble who sucks up to mother for her favor, how ludicrous. Can I go back to my room now?"

This second son is just the about same as the Marquis whom I directly met in the trade city

back then. He's too straight, he should be more indirect with the insult even if the other party is a lower ranked noble.

"Geritz-dono, aren't you being rude to that person? In our kingdom, we will be acting a bit more respectful even if the other person is a lower ranked noble nanoja."

As for this princess, although her way of talking is strange, she's unexpectedly proper.
The second son quietly cursed the princess, "Acting so impudent despite being a girl" in mutter while leaving the room after getting the madam's permission.

The madam apologized for his remark instead of the person himself. Is she being overprotective?

The third and fourth daughter of the Marquis couple entered in exchange. Gona the third daughter is lightly obese, while Shina the fourth daughter is thin and underweight unlike her sister and mother. Her face also looks somewhat different than the two. The older sister is still 12 years old, yet she's already been decided to marry into the house of a viscount who's their trusted retainer. Shina, the 10 years old little sister is still undecided due to her sickness.

"Excuse me."

The maid-san of the marquis's house came in while saying so. She's pushing a food trolley which has the Castella and blue tea that I've brought as presents.

"My, it's really an unusual cake isn't it?"
"It's soft."
"My, it's melting in my mouth.... What an elegant taste."
"It's a cake that the queen of a faraway elf kingdom eats, it's called Castella."

I'm not telling a lie. High elf-sama did stuff them into her mouth with great relish. Un, let's go and visit her with some castella later.

"As expected of the pastry of the large kingdom Shiga ja. Although the『Hotcake』from the other day was delicious, I have never eaten such delicious cake like this before. I also want to make my kingdom become able to have cakes like this freely available ja."

Glad that the princess-sama is also delighted.

The lightly obese third daughter-san has finished eating it in one go and is aiming for her little sister's plate, but it looks like she thinks it's improper in front of a guest, she doesn't seem like she'll make a move. I presented the one in my plate that I hadn't touched to her when the madam turned away her view for an instant.

"You eat it too Shina. It's sweet and delicious."
"Yes, mother."

The fourth daughter who has been urged by her mother cut a small piece of the yellow section of the castella and puts it into her mouth. After chewing it for a while, she leaks out

a voice of admiration, "Delicious", that sounds like a cry. Her expression doesn't change, but her pale face has become slightly reddish, so she's probably happy.

The madam asked my purpose for coming to the labyrinth city so I answered, "Explorer". The third and fourth daughters didn't seem to be particularly interested, but the princess bit it.

"Oh! You came here to become an explorer! That's good! I also came here to become an explorer noja. I will absolutely carve great deeds like your country's Ringrande-sama, and become the hero's companion noja."

As expected, I think it's impossible for the princess to become an explorer. Her level is only two, and she doesn't have any fighting skills. She only has the Etiquette skill.

Even though I'd like to tell her some things, for the time let's be polite and only said, "That's quite a wonderful dream."

◇

"I'm back."
"Welcome back, master. I have handed the baked sweets to the butler-san."

I come back to the inn with Lulu who's waiting on the carriage. I had asked Lulu to distribute baked sweets with a lot of honey to the maids. I learned from the duchy capital that I couldn't make light of the servants network, so I gave them extravagant baked sweets as a prior investment. I didn't give them Castella since Arisa advised me to differentiate it with the one for their master.

The carriage passed through the street of the wealthy heading toward the eastern Explorer Guild.

Arisa and the others are participating in a short course that the guild has sponsored. It seems the participation is free. I intend to have Arisa teaches me the content of the lecture later. This short course seems to have veteran explorers teach beginners various things like the way to conduct yourself in the labyrinth, and important characteristics of monsters, and it's held regularly.

The short course is performed on the open space behind the guild. The lecture seems to be quite legit as they put out image of monsters to do it, though I don't know whether it's from light magic or nature magic.

Not only Arisa and the others, Jenna from back then and five other explorers, and also 40 children have also come. The children include both genders, but there doesn't seem to be any boy that's older than 10 years here.

Since it looks like the lecture is over, the staffs distribute wooden tags for participating. I wonder if that's like a completion certificate?

When I was gazing at that somehow, the receptionist lady from yesterday called me.

"Ara, Chevalier-sama. Your vassals took the lecture intently."

She seems to be carrying a large pot out of the guild building. It seems to be hot as she's using dish cloths to hold the pot. She puts the pot on the long table counter that has been prepared beforehand, and calls people who have participated in the lecture.

"We're distributing food. It's Selbira-style Stew today. Line up with your wooden tag."

I see, it's like a school's lunch program. The children who have gathered for the meal end up gaining knowledge about the labyrinth, and as the result, they will probably survive better when they explore the labyrinth. The guild must be expecting that in exchange for the food and personnel expenses, the losses of explorers will be decreased, and the number of the gathered magic cores will be increased, no doubt about it. However, since this course only opens once every five days, and the number of participants are limited, it seems that the children that can come are restricted.

The children received the poured stew with their wooden bowls, sat down on suitable places on the hall and began eating it.

"Master, thank you for your hard work."
"'Elcome~?"
"It's master and Lulu nanodesu!"

The three beastkin girls are also carrying wooden bowls with the stew in it. Since Pochi presents her spoon while saying, "Aan, nanodesu", I eat it. The saltiness is intense, but it seems to be stew with boiled scrap vegetables and some kind of meat inside. I've never tasted it before, but it's probably monster's meat. Frankly speaking, it doesn't taste good.

Although, the only one who has that impression seem to be only me, the children are eating the stew enthusiastically. The expressions on the beastkin girls look complicated, but they're eating them without any complaint.

Arisa, Nana, and Mia are still surrounding the female explorer lecturer and asking her with barrage of questions. Glad to see they're studying hard.

"Sir Pendragon. It has been a while."
"Nice to meet you Sir Pendragon. I am the friend of Gina, the daughter of Baron Keter, Heliona. I belong to『Moonlight』(party)."

Miss Heliona is a tall black-haired woman. Her hair is styled in bob cut, but there's a hair ornament with arranged feathers that make it looks like a peacock on her hair. She's wearing knight-like clothes and pants. Her breasts are small unlike Jenna, but she's a sexy girl with a nice waist line. The [Friend of the same town] that Gina has said in when we meet her is probably this person.

"Sir Pendragon. I'm sorry for my rudeness, but you should wear armor when you're entering

the labyrinth. Even magicians wear leather armors before they enter the labyrinth. No matter how dexterous you are, we don't know if any surprise attack come from the surrounding. Don't be careless okay?"

Since Miss Heliona remonstrates me as a fellow explorer, I say my thanks and apology. Alas, we have become famous in the east guild due to a rumor about us getting kidnapped by the swarm of ants. It seems it was particularly known that it was an armor-less noble who entered the labyrinth while bringing some maids along. She's probably avoiding calling me "Fool" instead of "Noble". We should better wear some dummy armors next time.

"By the way Sir Pendragon, I've heard that you have a mithril sword, could you please let me see it once?"

While being bewildered with miss Heliona complete change who's fidgeting like she's going to confess her love, I pass her the fairy sword from my waist.

"Could I draw it?"
"Please."
"What a beautiful sword. However, it's surprisingly light. Won't this make it hard when you fight against big monsters? I think for labyrinth it's better to have a spear or a pole arm as the main weapon, and a dagger as the side arm.
Sadly, most people commonly wear monsters-made armors in the labyrinth city, but don't you think that nobles should wear beautiful full-body silver armor? That beautiful silver! With that comes the power to crush evil--"

Looks like she's wearing metal armor and a pole axe when she's entering the labyrinth. It seems she will fights with dagger, the side arm, in a narrow passage. She seemed to like metal armor and had thoughtlessly recommended me to wear full body one. Since her talk is long, I ignore it halfway through, but it seems miss Jenna has gotten used to it as she's having a bitter smile.

Her passionate armor talk seemed to be continuing on still, but I took the chance when Arisa and the others came back and excused myself.

In the afternoon, I go to the firm that Sunifun-san, the merchant in Seryuu city, has told me and mail some letters toward Seryuu city. My letters are for the worker guild and Zena-san, Pochi and Tama are sending letter for the gate inn Yuni. It's as expensive as one silver coin a letter, but it's probably cheap considering how far the trip is.

After sending the letters, I go toward the [Mansion of Ivy] as scheduled.

Part 14 - Mansion of Ivy

Satou's here. Basements appeared a lot in mystery (works), but when I was in Japan, I had never even seen one. I wonder if it's really because of the problem with the law and tax that people build it above ground instead after all?

◇

I don't know the exact location of this Mansion of Ivy, but it's easy to look for it. When I used [Spirit Seer] skill as instructed by Mia, I could see one section of the labyrinth city where the spirits had gathered. After that it was as simple as marking it on the map, and going there via the shortest route.

The Mansion of Ivy is located in the northern side of the labyrinth city. It's to the west of the north gate, at the end of the wealthy area just before the pleasure quarter. There is a lush green park not far off the rampart, and the mansion of ivy exists there.

Just like the name implies, it's covered with ivy. The mansion is less than half as big compared to other mansions in this area of the wealthy, but the land size seems to be about as big. Transparent water is flowing in two meters wide moat outside the mansion hedges. Since there are low hedges outside the moat, it seems the moat is also part of the Mansion of Ivy. The clear water that flows in the moat seems to be flowing to the pond on the park via a small canal.

The area around here is slightly elevated several meters above compared to the neighborhood. The water that has flown to the pond seems to be flowing into the town through small waterways.

The carriage suddenly changes its course just before the Mansion of Ivy.

"What's wrong Lulu?"
"I'm sorry, I don't know why but I feel that I have to change the carriage's course no matter what."

The log displays [『Forest of Hesitation (Return Home)』 magic is successfully resisted]. It seems to be some kind of people clearing magic.

"It seems that there's a magic under effect, so I will take only Mia along from here. Everyone wait here for a bit."

I tell so to everyone and go with Mia to the Mansion of Ivy.
Mia is acting normally, I wonder if this magic does not work on elves. Just in case, I pass the medallion from Giril to Mia.

There's an archway arbor with waist-height white trees that acts as the front gate. However, there's a moat that's full of water just beyond that gate, yet there is no bridge to cross it.

When I check with magic Perception, it seems that the low moat is under effect of space-based magic. According to Giril, the owner of this mansion is Trazayuya-shi, I wonder if he wanted to make a fortress? Or maybe the security in the area was so bad that you couldn't be at ease without doing this much.

『Gate, open, I am Misanalia of Boruenan Forest. Gatekeeper, Come here quickly.』

Mia read the phrase for opening the gate that's written on the back of the medallion. Even though Mia usually rarely talks, she sure is good at reciting lines isn't she.

A little girl was peeking on the opposite side of the main gate, and when our eyes met, she hid behind the gate. She's a House Fairy (Brownie). Her green hair that's nearly black is put in short ponytail.

『Gatekeeper, Come here quickly』

Yielding to the repeated lines of Mia, a bridge appears between the gates. It's a transparent bridge that looks like a glass.

"Nn."

I grasp Mia's hand which she has presented, and we cross the bridge toghether.

"Misanalia-sama, I am the guard of this Mansion of Ivy, Leriril, Giril's granddaughter."
"Just call me Mia."
"I cannot do such thing. To call elf-sama with their nickname! Please call me Leriril without honorific."
"Nn, Leriril."

Giril was also like her, but compared to him Leriril looks far more child-like. From human's standpoint, she looks like a 6-7 years old child. By the way, she's a 60 years old girl. I feel like she'd be mad at me if I say Kanreki. Her level is quite high at 20. She has hiding skill and race-specific skills. She seems to be an expert of scouting and the like.

"By the way, Misanalia-sama, who is that human brat over there? A mere human being holding hands with the honorable elf-sama, how extremely rude of him. Let me teach him his position."

I got suddenly dissed during our first meeting.
The people in the elf hometown didn't discriminate against humans, but I wonder if she has come to hate humans after being surrounded by them? I wonder why, I somehow feel that I can't defend the humans.

"Rude. Satou is my fiance."
"Eh? Eeh? That's a joke right?"
"Mwu, officially approved by parents."
"Hahaha, that, that cannot be~"

Leriril waved both her hands round and round to deny Mia's fiance remark as it seemed to be shocking for her. She passed her limit when she heard about the approval of Mia's parents, she fainted.

◇

We can't exactly let her sleep here just like this, so we bring her to a tree shade and lay her on a sheet.

Sometimes refreshing cool breeze blows from the greeneries that exist due to the moat that surrounds the mansion ground. In the dusty labyrinth city, it's only here and the park surrounding it that feel like it's from another world.

"Ha, I saw a bad dream."
"Nn, dream?"
"Yes, an elf-sama was seduced by a human brat."

What a rude thing to say toward the youngster who had carried you to a tree shade and nursed you.
She gets up unsteadily, and looks toward Mia in a surprise. And then, she seemed to have sensed my presence, she turned toward me in an awkward robot-like movement. I'll leave out the uproar afterward, and just write down that it's quite difficult to deal with the little girl.

"Now then, Misanalia-sama and Satou, please come here."

Leriril who has finally concedes my existence leads us into the mansion. Arisa and the other who are waiting outside have been excluded from the effect of [Forest of Hesitation (Return Home)], and since I've called them with [Telephone], they will probably come here soon.

It seems the Medal of Proxy that Leriril carries can control the entrance bridge and the isolation magic. The Medal of Manager that Mia carries has higher authority than Leriril's medal.

"And, am I wrong to assume that Misanalia-sama is the new master of the Mansion of Ivy?"
"No. The master is Satou."
"Eh? That br-, Satou, is?"

Was she going to say brat?
Well, it's not wrong for an old woman on her 60 to call me brat though.

"Yeah, Giril told me to go ahead and use this mansion if I'm staying in labyrinth city. That medal is also something that he has entrusted to me."
"Ceh, that senile old man.... No, from esteemed grandfather is it? I can't believe it."
"Mwu, fact."

No no, Leriril. You're too late for the retake. You've gone and said him as senile old man after all.

"Err, maybe grandfather was being senile, no his physical condition was bad at the time?"

This child really has a bad mouth.

"Satou is the benefactor of Boruenan Forest. A friend of Aze."
"By Aze, do you perhaps mean Aialize-sama the high elf? For a high elf-sama to show herself before a human! Moreover, friend is it? Even though high elf-sama is the heaven holy priest that can even be called a demi-god."

I'd have been fine if she falsify her as my lover. However, something like demi-god or heaven holy priest really, those are the most unsuitable names for Aialize-san.

"Yes, I've gotten along well with her. I have been taught Spirit Magic and Spirit Seer by her, and even taken to the observatory of the world tree."

After getting greatly shaken, Leriril fell on the floor and prostrated to beg forgiveness for her impoliteness. Moreover, she said, "I can't call you without honorifics if you're the friend of high elf-sama", and added [Sama] to call me. Afterward, she also calls other members with [Sama] since they're also Aialize-san's friends.

◇

"Misanalia-sama and everyone else too, please enter."

Guided by Leriril, we enter the mansion. The inside is of an extremely normal mansion. There is a mirror at the end of a narrow passage that's located in one corner of the living room and hard to find.

She holds her medal out, and waves-like light appear on the surface of the mirror.

"Please follow me."

And then she jumps into the mirror. Oh, that looks like a mirror that could take you to another world, wait, this is already another world. According to the map, Leriril is 10 meters below the ground, so this is probably some kind of teleport gate. After confirming that, I also follow.

The space is awfully bright even though it's underground. The ceiling is also more than three meters high. This brightness is just like the outside. Most likely, there are plants with light fiber stalks like we have on the labyrinth villa's ceiling, or some kind of magic that transmit the light from outside here.

The place in five meters radius from here is like a courtyard, weeds that look like lawn are growing. When I confirm on the map, it seems the Mansion of Ivy occupies the same space as the park above underground. It's extended 30-50 meters underground. There are more than 100 rooms it seems. There are also workshops and facilities that Trazayuya-shi has used, I have to ask if I can use it later.

"Here is the main building of the Mansion of Ivy. The mansion on the ground above is a fake for visitors."
"He's quite the careful one."
"Trazayuya-sama was a gentleman that was called the elf sage. Esteemed grandfather has told me that sage-sama had a lot of magic tools and magic engineering inventions, and when sage-sama was inside the labyrinth, there were always thieves or nations that aimed for his assets."

I see, it's not because of paranoia, but self-defense huh.

"Even now, every time the viceroy is replaced, they always attack with armed groups trying to make this mansion into their possession."

Yet it doesn't fall, isn't that amazing?

"High level explorers should be able to break through it though?"
"Anyone who lives in this city absolutely won't attack the Mansion of Ivy."

Leriril declared so full of confidence toward Arisa's question.

"After all, the Fake Core of this mansion is the thing that maintains the water source of this city."
"Uwah, taking a hold of the lifeline huh, Trazayuya is good. As expected of sage-sama."

Leriril doesn't seem to know the detail, but the thing about Fake Core is written in the documents that he has left behind. According to it, it was a magic tool that preceded the Maze Core, and it was made using large amount of Philosopher's Stones. It seems to be a good system that can do various things like absorbing magic power from the Earth's Vein nearby, using preset functions, or supplying magic power into the magic tools that are connected to it.

In this case, it uses the function of the Fake Core to draw out the water from the underground water vein.

"However, in that case, isn't it bad if we live here?"
"That's right, it'll be fine if we're inside the mansion, but a mansion dweller who's wandering outside the mansion could become a hostage, we might get involved in various troubles~"

Arisa also agrees. However, I'd love to use the facilities here.

"What about buying a house outside and enter here from there? We can just use master's or my space magic to go in and out."
"You're right, let's go with that."

Let's ask about the dummy house from the marchioness or the general if there's one that's a good fit.
After having a tea party to get ourselves acquainted, we chose our rooms in the mansion, put the carved seal board, and then left toward the inn.

Additionally, the castella was quite popular with everyone.

Part 15 - Red Iron Plate

Satou's here. I wonder why is my free time decreasing every time I get a promotion. Well, it goes without saying that the causes are the slightly raised salary and the many more works I must do.

◇

"I'm very sorry."

The receptionist onee-san over the counter is deeply apologizing.
We've come here to receive the Bronze Plates, but--

"Actually the guildmaster has raised an objection for it."

--An interruption has come, and it seems our promotions have been stopped.

"Eh~, I'm firmly against this!"
"I'm truly very sorry. I'm told that the guildmaster has an objection on Sir Pendragon since something like this is unprecedented..."

I understand Arisa's dissatisfaction, but there's nothing can be done even if we press this person further.

"When will we know if our promotion is admitted or not? May we use these temporary plates until then?"
"Y, yes. You can have the temporary Bronze plates as they are now. I think it'll only take a few days at the longest, so it'd be helpful if you come to the guild in five days."

Right, we haven't registered our contact address to the guild.

While calming Arisa who's still discontent, we leave the guild. An onee-san around thirty who descends from a carriage that has just arrived as we come out, calls me in fluster.

"U-um, excuse me, but are you Chevalier Pendragon-sama?"
"Yes, I am, can I help you?"
"I came for an errand from the guildmaster. I am Ushana the guildmaster's secretary. I'm sorry for being so sudden, but could you go with me to the west guild?"

Arisa is posing triumphantly while whispering, "The template is here" behind. I'm only planning to buy the dummy house today, so I don't mind visiting the guildmaster. I told her my consent, and we headed to the west guild together.

◇

A wand is coming toward me right in front of my eyes.

Sharp like a spear, it was suddenly thrust before my eyes when I opened the door. I lightly

brush the attack that's even sharper than Liza's spear blow, avoiding it. The other party passes the eluded wand over the shoulder to the other hand, and attacks again. Is this what they call wand arts?

And then I continue to elude all of the ever-changing long wand attacks.
I wonder what does this person want to do anyway?

The one who stops this unreasonable attacks is the secretary, Ushana's words.

"Guildmaster! If you keep doing that any longer, Seberkea-sama will scold you!"
"Ceh, we were just in the good part. Right, Satou?"

Yes, the one who has been attacking me with the long wand since awhile ago is the guildmaster-san. Moreover, she's a 87 years old old woman, so I couldn't counterattack really. She's a level 52 magician who has fire and light magic skills. I want this childish old woman to take some lesson from Tenion head-miko.

I'm the only one who's come here. Arisa and the others are touring the guild hall below.

"Unfortunately, I'm not fond of getting surprise attacks."
"What, aren't you the battle freak who stayed overnights from the first day of his labyrinth diving, and then went on to collect more than 100 magic cores?"

How rude. I've only defeated 20-30 monsters at most.

"I was only watching from behind, my companions were the ones who actually fought."
"Bah, who would believe that nonsense. Even if that was the truth, it was because the monsters were small fries whom you did not need fight right?"

It's most likely just guessworks, but it's relatively true.
It seems she had felt that I was going to deceive her, she spoke first before I could.

"Moreover, that sword is something that old Dohar's created right? Like that old man would give the sword he made himself to a small fry. If you're going to deceive people, wrap that Truth Mark with some cloth."

I didn't specially hide the mark since no one at the duchy capital noticed it. I thought that it wasn't rare since I saw a lot of arms that had truth marks in the elf hometown, but it seems I was wrong.

"Elder Dohar is my drinking buddy."

I can't exactly tell her that I've made the sword together with elder Dohar.
I wonder why. The moment she heard "Drinking buddy" part, guildmaster's eyes lit up like a carnivore who had found its prey.

"Hou? Then, why don't I become your drinking buddy too?"
"Yes, if you're alright with me, I'll bring some liquor and appetizers."

It's troubling that she seems to be a battle mania, but I think of her like elder Dohar in the [Un-detestable Elderly] category. I would refuse if she was going to manipulate me, but it'd seem that I could hear many interesting old stories if I drank with her.

"Very well, it's a banquet then!"
"You can't."

Ushana-san who had come back while bringing a shallow box denied the declaration of the guildmaster who looked happy. It's still noon after all.

"Please confer the guild plates here first. You can do the banquet afterward."
"Ceh. I know I know. Satou, receive these Red Iron Plates."

Hmm? It should have been Bronze Plates though?

"Don't look so confused. That stiff viscount talked a lot about your achievements y'know?"

Come to think of it, Viscount Shimen was going here and there when he was trying to rescue me. Did he say something exaggerated during that time?

"Was it『The Hero of Muno City Defense War』and『Gururian City Demon Slayer』I guess?
A senior explorer from our guild was there right at that time, do you remember? There was a report from that guy too. Regardless of the fact that it was a low-class demon, we can't give the party that has defeated a demon unhurt with Wooden or Bronze Plates."
"That said, giving you Mithril Plates would be too much. If you had at least defeated a middle-class demon then."
"Humph, those guild council fools, it would have been a new record if they had just nodded, it was almost there y'know."

Apparently, the guildmaster was scheming to force the Mitrhil Plates on us. I thank you the good senses of the guild councils whom I've never seen in my mind. Even though it would have made Arisa happy, I feel that the disadvantages are too many.

Ushana-san explains about the Red Iron Plates. Of course it's not just me, everyone is going to be promoted to Red Iron Plates.
We've acquired it easily this time, but normally a Bronze explorer needs to give the guild high-grade magic cores in long term to raise his status. It seems that one normally needs five to ten years to get it, this Red Iron Plate sounds trouble enough.

"Is it alright? We have only dived to the labyrinth once you know?"
"Guildmaster has authority to confer until the Red Iron Plates. We can't issue it excessively, but we haven't issued it even once in two years here, so the royal castle probably won't complain."

Ushana-san continues her talk, and it's come to the advantages of the Red Iron Plates. There are many small financial advantages like half-off for handling charges and building rents that involve the guild. I'm not too happy since I'm not in trouble financially at all.

"And finally, the most important point is--"

Please tell the most important thing in the beginning.

"--People who are holding this Red Iron Plates are treated like associate nobles. It can't grant noble privilege like Chevalier-sama has, but it guarantees the social position that equal the knights. Since this is guaranteed in the name of Shiga King, not only it is valid inside the kingdom, it's also valid even when you visit other countries."

Of course it's not only valid for humans, but also for demi-humans it seems. Looks like they can stay in the inn if they have the Red Iron Plates, even in the area where discriminations against demi-humans run deep like in Seryuu city.

I asked Ushana-san if it was alright for a non-government body to issue privileges of associate nobles.

"Even though the Explorer Guild call itself a guild, it's actually the managing body of the labyrinth resource ministry of Shiga Kingdom. The guildmaster holds the position of the labyrinth resource minister of Shiga Kingdom, and she's treated as an earl when she's in office, so there's no problem."

I see, so the kingdom is behind it after all. I thought that it was strange that they let civilians managed the money tree, but I understand now.

I asked her just in case, it seems people who held the Mitrhil Plate was not only treated as an associate noble like the people who had the Red Iron Plates, but they would be bestowed the honorary nobility peerages from the king.

"By the way Satou. About the banquet schedule, how about this evening."
"Yes, I'll make it open for it."
"Ouh, good answer. I happened to hear about this, that Eltall brat was boasting that he had just gotten himself some very fine liquor--"

Putting aside her calling general Eltall brat, the dragon spring liquor is too popular. I have to bring some goats as presents for Heiron the black dragon.

Don't tell me, she didn't do the unprecedented promotion to aim for the liquor right?

"W, what's with those eyes. It's nothing like that okay? The promotion got nothing to do with the liquor y'know?"

The flustered guildmaster was slightly suspicious, but since Ushana-san denied it, it was just a groundless suspicion, it seems.

Now then, I need to bring the Red Iron Plates to Arisa and the others who are waiting in excitements below.

Part 16 - Guild Disturbance

Satou's here. In the old dungeon-exploring games, you assemble your party in the bar, revive and release your curse in the temple, and getting ripped-off in stores.

◇

I explain the details regarding the circumstances and give the Red Iron Plates to Arisa and the others who are waiting downstairs.

"Yafuu! It's a promotion authorized straight by the guild master!"
"Okashiratsuki~?"
"Its eyes are scary nodesu!"

Arisa exaggeratedly getting happy, she pushes her hands up and jumps.
Tama, that's not right. Pochi is still scared at the eyes on the fish head that she said was looking at her. The two mimicked Arisa, jumped, and almost hit their heads on the ceiling. It's dangerous if you don't grasp your own physical prowess you know?

The other members look reserved, but it seems they're also happy.

"Keh, since when did Explorer Guild become children's playground?"

I guess we were too noisy?
I looked back and was going to apologize, but that intent disappeared immediately.

Since the man was kicking the children who were gathering near the entrance of the guild around. He wasn't talking about us, but the baggage carrier children who were occupying the entrance. This man looks familiar. If I'm not mistaken, he's the party leader of the male explorer party that were running from the ants.

The kicked children don't have serious injuries yet they can't move and fall limp on the guild's wall. Just like the tigerkin back then, how could big men like them kick children around.

"Violence against young organisms are dangerous, thus prohibited, so I tell. Warn them with words, so I recommend."
"What's with you bastard? Hou, aren't you quite the beauty. Don't you have the wrong job? You can make more money as a prostitute than an explorer y'know?"

The man's hands casually stretch toward Nana.
The armor that Nana usually wears has green silk in the interior layer, whale leather in the middle layer, and the armored newt leather on the outside. It looks like a soft leather armor from the outside, and although it is actually soft, the armored newt leather part harden when it's supplied with magic power.

It's the leather from a monster with [Armor] on its name. It can repel swords and spears

used by normal soldiers.

What would happen to defenseless fingers that tried to grab her breasts.
This man will learn the answer to that question with his body.

"Fi-fingers, my great fingers areee"

The man screamed like he was surprised, and crouched down on the floor.

"You bitch, what did you do to Besso"
"Enemy of Besso!"
"Denied. He has brought it upon himself, I report."

Those men seem to be friends of the crouching man. The faces of those two are red. Looks like they've been drinking liquor in daytime.
Those two did the unbelievable thing of drawing their swords inside the Explorer Guild, let alone th city.

Now then, guess I'll arrest them before anyone got hurt.
Liza drives her spear to the flank of the man, before I can step forward. Of course it's not with the pointed tip part, but the blunt one, and lightly at that.

Liza was intending to do it lightly, but with a small sound, a hole was formed on the man's armor that seemed to be made from monster's shell, and he fainted after getting his abdomen hit hard. The poked man fainted in agony, and the other man beside him lost his balance and rolled on the floor.

『Oy, aren't those guys wearing ant shell armors?』
『B, breaking that so easily like that...』

The peanut gallery are saying something, but since this armor is far more brittle compared to the shell breastplates I've given to Kon's friends, it can't be helped if it breaks.

Besso who had his fingers bent picked up his friend's sword that had fallen to the ground and tried to attack Lulu.

I was closing on her like sliding to intercept him, but in the end, it was meaningless. Lulu easily evaded Besso's sword, and then pinned him down to the ground. Besoo who has been held down is resisting, but it's almost like there's no effect, maybe it's due to her level that's almost twice as high, or her self-defense skill.

『Maid-san is strooong』
『Did you see her movement just now?』
『Didn't Besso and his gangs win against the viceroy's soldiers who were three times their number at the bar back then?』
『If the maid-san is that strong, that means those runts are also strong...』

The remaining one has also been defeated by Tama and Pochi who are barehanded, he's

groveling on the floor.

『Aren't those runts too strong?』
『Then those guys are the rumored beastkin children who easily opened the labyrinth gate?』
『That means, the two frail-looking children over there are also as strong?』
『Unbelievable...』

The peanut gallery are noisy.

"Oy, I'll throw you to the guild dungeon if you're making too much rackets in the hall y'knooo~?!"

A heavily armored soldier with good physique who had come with a guild staff from the interior warned us. He ended his word strangely.

I felt like I had seen his face somewhere, so I tried to remember it. He's the explorer with a big shield who was downed by the demon in Gururian city.

『It's the Great Shield Gell.』
『He survived fighting a demon y'hear?』
『As expected of Iron Wall Gell.』

He rushed before me and asked.

"Excuse me, but aren't you Sir Pendragon?"
"Yes, we've met in Gururian city if I remember right."

He didn't seem to think that I would remember him.

"I can keep living like this thanks to Sir Pendragon who helped me."
"It's thanks to the hard works of my companions."

He's looking around for someone restlessly while thanking me.

"Ge, gell bro."

I remembered the existence of Besso after hearing his voice down below. I gesture Lulu to let him go.

"Ah, the daredevil who picked a quarrel with Sir Pendragon was you huh."

Gell treated Besso who came to cling on him coldly. Quite a difference in enthusiasm.

"You hear? Everyone hear me out! These people are experts who have defeated a demon that appeared in a city of a distant dukedom. Furthermore! They did not only defeat it. It was a complete victory! They defeated the demon without even suffering a single injury."

He talks passionately about how strong we were to the peanut gallery. He seemed to particularly remember about Pochi and Tama who took him to the safety zone, and thanked

the two as his life saviors.

"By the way Sir Pendragon. Today, are you not together with the beautiful goddess who was fighting barehanded at that time?"

The one who was fighting barehanded at that time was only lady Karina. He's probably looking for lady Karina since a while ago.

"Yes, she has already returned to her territory."
"Territory is it?"
"Yes, she is the daughter of Baron Muno, Karina-sama."

Afterwards, Gell asked various things about lady Karina. While we're at it, I tell him about the shortage of soldier and knight of the territory army. I don't think that he will enter into government service, but explorers who have heard this story might want to go there out of curiosity.

◇

As a punishment for drawing out swords inside the guild hall, Besso and his gang are to reflect in the guild dungeon for three days, so Gell took them away. Liza used her spear too, but since it wasn't the pointed end but the blunt end, it was waived.

The children who were kicked looked like they would get some bruises, but they had gone outside before the staff could warn them.

"Isn't that macho dimwitted for calling that Karina a goddess?"
"Nn."
"Karina, strong~?"
"She's agile like, pyonpyon, nanodesu!"

Arisa and Mia have low assessment of lady Karina. Pochi and Tama tried to defend her, but since the point was wrong, they weren't really successful about it.

◇

Since we've come to the guild already, I decided to might as well sightsee the facilities here. I'm being guided by Arisa and the others who have explored ahead of time.

First, let's go to the room where the contracted temple priests reside in the guild.

There are beautiful male and female priests to the point of me wanting to ask if they were selected by their looks. Looks like detoxification, curse dissolution, paralysis release, and healing the severely wounded person are free of charge. There's also life magicians who work as their assistants. Stopping bleeding and disinfecting wounds are probably their jobs.

There's also a place that sells labyrinth maps and information.

Looks like they're selling information about unknown areas, or unknown passages in an area here. It seems only Red Iron explorers and higher can buy and sell information here. Wooden and Bronze ones are to trade information and maps in front of the labyrinth.
There was a map of the first area and the areas that adjoin it pinned on the wall of this room, I only knew it after coming here. Even now, there is a man that seems to be a beginner explorer who's working hard to copy it.

There's also a curio store for explorers.

They're selling emergency goods like preserved food, sleeping bags, and bandages, there are also torches, monster-warding powder, flash balls, smoke balls, ropes, thin weed strings etc. Some unusual things include small metal plates, and mirrors.
I'm wondering what they're used for, but it seems the metal plates are clappers for warning, and the mirrors are for checking enemies positions from the back.
The items in this store are of good quality, but since they're more expensive than the ones in the private-owned stores, the only people who buy here are the wealthy noble-borne explorers, it seems.

Of course, there is also a pharmacy that sells medicines and magic potions suited for explorers.
And, I heard something that sounded like a quarrel from that pharmacy.

Part 17 - Temporary Residence

Satou's here. The heavy responsibility of mortgage that you get when you're buying a house is often called one of the three trials of life. As such, buying 'my home' is a serious thing even in another world.

◇

"Anti-poison magic potion is out of stock? Wait a minute, haven't some alchemy materials just arrived from the royal capital last week?"
"Yes, the guild exclusive alchemists had done their best to compound them, but the『Fang of Conflagaration』bought them all, saying that they were going to subdue the cockatrice."
"Ceh, those Red Iron Plate guys huh."

Real life cockatrice huh. I might want to see it for a bit.
However, people usually imagine cockatrice for its petrification, but it can use poison too huh.

"Therefore, I recommend going to the pharmacy or alchemist stores in the city..."
"Those stores are under the backing of the viceroy so they're twice as expensive as the guild store y'know. Hey, isn't there one left at least?"

The man still harasses her. The employee onee-san looks troubled.

"We have magic potions for spider poison or ant poison, but there is no general one left."
"I don't have the money to buy several kinds. Can't be helped, give me two spider poison magic potion, and also three low-rank healing potion."
"Yes, one low-rank antidote is two silver coins, and one low-rank healing potion is one silver coin."

It's quite cheap.
The male explorer pays it by lining up coins on the counter. Looks like he's not good with calculation.

"Next one please."
"Ah, excuse me. I wasn't actually queuing."

I lightly apologize for standing in a misleading place.

I asked if they would purchase medicines, but since they had exclusive pharmacists and alchemists already, they would only buy items that were in shortage.

"However, most of the items are in shortage. Medicinal plants won't grow on the outskirts of this city, and although we have alchemists and materials gathered from the labyrinth by the explorers, the consumption is too intense we're having chronic shortage."

Looks like the plentiful ones are only the ointment for stopping bleeding, and alcohol for

disinfecting wounds. It seems that if you have magic potions that are in shortage with quality that's higher than a certain level, they would buy it at eight times the price the guild is selling. When I took out the diluted magic potion for her to judge, it was worth four big copper coins.

"Even though the healing quantity barely qualifies, the stability is wonderful. This shouldn't go bad or deteriorate even while it's taken into the labyrinth."

Magic potions can spoil huh.
I have to check the magic potions in Arisa's Item Box, and everyone's Fairy Pouch (Magic Pouch) later.

That reminded me about the Dragon White Stones which I had brought a lot from Seryuu city, when I checked to her if I could sell it, she asked if they could buy it all instead.

When I was sending letters to Seryuu City the other day, I heard from some merchant that the shortest route, the northern route had been blocked, so they were going to the southern roundabout route which would take some time, that was probably the cause.
Apparently, one of the city in Lesseu Earldom was destroyed by a rampaging mid-class demon, so it can't be helped that circulation of goods has been stopped.

"No that story is already settled since hero-sama has exterminated the demon, but--"
"Dragon?"

According to her, it seems that a dragon has nested in the mountain pass that's located in the Zetsu Earldom that's between Lesseu Earldom and the Royal Capital. As the result, the northern highway of the kingdom has been completely blocked, and the circulation of goods stops. That's bothersome.

"Since the Kingdom Conference will be held next month, the kingdom knights and even the Eight Shiga Swords-sama have been deployed to subjugate the dragon, so please bear with it for a while."

If I compare the two Shiga Eight Swords I've met in the duchy capital and Heiron the black dragon, I'm confident that the blockade will continue for a long while.

Well then, putting aside that situation, let's go back to the trade.

I took out a small bottle out of the magic bag, and put it on the counter. There are 300 grams fine powder of dragon white stone inside. This small bottle can become material for making 30 antidotes.

She told me that they're buying it for 30 silver coins.
I bought 18 kilograms of small barrel for 10 gold coins back then. It has decreased to only 10 kilograms after I removed impurities and made it into fine powder, yet it can be sold for 20 times the initial cost.

The pharmacy onee-san seemed to misunderstand me who was slightly taken back from the

excessive profit.

"I understand that it's impolite for an alchemist to only sell raw materials, but since the all-purpose antidotes are quick to be spoiled, we can't handle it if you bring a lot of the finished goods."

Thus, when someone want to buy the all-purpose antidote, the guild exclusive alchemist will compound it for them.

I decided to sell two small bottles of the dragon white stone fine powder, and five diluted magic potions. I should tell the explorer from a while ago that the antidote might be back in stock if I meet him again.

◇

"These are the three mansions that meet Chevalier-sama's request."

The male guild staff that handles real estate points at the labyrinth city map to present them.

They are a workshop in the craftsman district, a mansion in the wealthy area, and a mansion with a ranch and a farm nearby. He told me that the mansion with the ranch nearby had been vacant for nearly 10 years, so it would need some repair.

After thinking about it for a bit, I chose the mansion near the ranch since it would be easy to stock vegetables and dairy products then.

Arisa harshly said, "I can't believe you bought a house without even seeing it." but it was meaningless to worry about the condition of a dummy house anyway, so I decided to quickly buy it. I can just buy a replacement if I don't like it.

It was reasonably priced at half the market price, 150 gold coins, but due to the intervention of the guildmaster who appeared out of nowhere, it was became further half of that.
The reason that this mansion is relatively expensive for its location is because it's constructed with woods architecture which is rare in this labyrinth city. A collector would have jumped on this, but since the repair cost was high, there was no buyer.

The annual tax is 15 gold coins considering the structure and the location of the mansion. I'm told that Red Iron Plate possessor can also pay half the price of the tax. Since the discount only applies to one house, there doesn't seem to be any explorer who owns multiple houses.

In exchange for the gold coins I've taken out of the magic bag, I receive the registration documents for the mansion, and a bunch of keys. A person who had Contract skill came for the registration process.

◇

We go out of the guild building since I've finished my business in the guild.
There, eyes full of expectation from the children are looking at us.

It's a bit scary.

Lead by the little girls baggage carrier from before, there are 30-40 children looking at us in the surrounding. Beyond them, the stalls owners seem to be also watching here. I see, so they clogged the guild entrance to the point of getting kicked by the explorer from before because they gathered for the possibility of being treated to meal huh.

No one is saying anything, but the sound of the growling stomaches of the children fill the tense atmosphere.
It'll be annoying if they keep like this so I guess I'll treat them.

I give some small changes to Arisa and the others, and ask them to treat the children with some meals.

"Now then, little girls! Chevalier Pendragon will treat you to a meal. Everyone thank him!"
""""Thank you, Chevalier-sama."""

I wave my hand to reply the gratitude of the great number of little girls, and the few boys.

"Meat~?"
"Arisa, meat are nice nodesu!"
"The nutrition will be imbalanced like that, so no. Let's make it something like stir-fried vegetables that's filling for the stomach."

The middle-aged men of the stalls raise their sales voices toward Arisa and the others who are discussing which dishes.

"Li'l lady-chan, our porridge has vegetables and meat inside, so it's filling for ta' stomach y'know?"
"What're you saying, our dumpling soup is the best. There's vegetables inside too, and our meat dumplings 'ere the most filling~"
"Awright, let's go with both! Everyone, line up on the one you like! You'll only be treated to one of them."

From the word of Arisa who feels too bothersome to choose, the children's eyes are wandering between the two stalls. In the end, they seemed to think that they will miss the meal if they were late, so when one of the children queued, two lines were immediately formed. Pochi and Tama are standing in a row to prevent the chaotic children blocking the traffic.

After saying good bye to the children who had become full, we went to the house I had just purchased.

◇

"Ugeh, it's weed everywhere."
"Leave it to me~?"
"Equipping mowing equipment nanodesu!"

Arisa leaks out her complaint in front of the mansion that's overgrown with weed. Tama and Pochi are posing with the sickles they've taken from the pouches, on their hands. Nana also takes out a long sickle. They've also been like this on the highway before, these three really like mowing huh.

I insert a key to the big padlock on the mansion gate. It's slightly rusted, but it can be opened with force.

Now then, there are about five children in the mansion, or to be exact, behind the private stable on the mansion plot. They're most likely orphans who are staying in the vacant house illegally. Their levels are low, I'll instruct Nana and the others to look at them while they're mowing.

"Nana, take Pochi and Tama to investigate the stable."
"Yes, master."
"Roger~"
"Nanodesu!"

The three make their way through the weed to the stable while making a path.
The remaining ones, that were us, decided check the water well. Arisa skillfully mowed the weed along the way with space magic.

The block for hanging the well bucket has rotted, its wreckage is lying on the floor. There is a bucket with rope beside the lid that covers the well to prevent trash from entering it. That bucket is slightly wet. The orphans just now are probably using it.

"This's baad"
"It's bad nanodesu!"
"Emergency, so I report! A life is in peril. I wish urgent relief as soon as possible."

The three who've gone to the stable rush back here.
Apparently, the orphans are not merely illegal residents, it seems.

Part 18 - Temporary Residence (2)

Satou's here. A long time ago, my aunt couple moved into the detached building of my grandfather's house, so I had helped the clean-up. I did the rare experiences of exchanging tatamis, and replacing shoji papers.

◇

Led by the three, I've come to behind the stable where five 10-13 years old children have sat down.

It's a bit late, but I check their details now. The map indicators default to only show races and levels. Even during extended search, it normally only shows Name, Race, Age, Gender, and Level. As for the people who are antagonistic, or have crime, they are classified in red color, while people who have unknown skills or level 50 and higher are in blue. I've adjusted like so since having too many indicators narrows the viewing field.

The ones over there are exactly according to the information, children. However, they seem to haven't eaten for a long time, they've been debilitated to dangerous degrees. Judging from the well earlier, they probably haven't drank enough water either. Their consciousness seem to be muddy, only one of them react to our presents. That child doesn't seem to be moving either.

I give the nutrient supplements that I've used at Puta town back then to these children. Moreover, I heal their wounds one by one with magic healing. Every one of the child have wounds that are bordering at turning into gangrene from bone fractures on their limbs, the lacerations are awful.
There was a child with some malformed bone from the bone fracture, but I was able to correct it by diligently applying magic healing.

"How is it?"
"Ah, their life are not in danger for the time being. I've healed them by forcing them to swallow the medicines, so they're sleeping from the tiredness. After some time, give them some water and the nutrient supplements again. They should be fine after we give them light rice porridge tomorrow morning."
"As expected of master. Unrestrained praises are overflowing!"
"I'm glad~" "Nodesu!"

I'll leave Nana to nurse these children.
I felt sorry if I left them sleep on the ground like that, so I spread out the felt that we usually used in camping grounds, put a soft sheet on top of it, and laid them down on it.

◇

"Spiderwebs~?"
"It's sticky, nodesu."
"Satou."

Mia who's covered in spiderweb, and Pochi who's also in the same state with her ears flopping down are in tears.

That's why I said to let me go first.

The result of checking the inside of the mansion; besides one section of the floor that has rotted, everything else is only covered in spiderwebs, so we should be able to do something about it.

Since there were a lot of junks like broken chairs that are left behind, I put them into the storage in the trash folder. It was easy with the combination of [Magic Hand] techniques.

It's a two-story building which also has an attic and a basement. The area are around 60 tsubos excluding the attic and the basement, it's about twice as large as an average Japanese house. The basement was camouflaged as a wine cellar, but there was a cleverly hidden door, and behind the door was a room fully loaded with machines for a specific fetish, I wasn't sure how to handle it. Since it would be bad for the education of the youth troupe, I destroyed it like 'crack' and made it into a vacant room. Let's make a dummy laboratory here later.

There are two separate buildings for visitors who are staying and for servants besides the main building on the plot. The visitor building is a two-story one like the main building, while the servants building is a bungalow. Each of them has around 45 tsubos floor space. There are only six rooms in the visitor building, but there are 10 spacious rooms and five narrow rooms in the servant building despite them having the same floor spaces.

Only the main building has a dining room. There isn't any bath, maybe because water is precious. Let's break one room in the first floor and turn it into a bathroom. Black splinters and ashes that look to be from coals are gathered in the stove in the kitchen.

"It's quite wide huh. How long will it take to make this habitable?"
"We should be able to make it in five days if it's just us maybe?"

Lulu tilts her head while replying to Arisa's fed up words.

"Lulu, as expected it's impossible for just us five to clean such a wide area like this. Master, how about letting the children that you've treated this morning help? If it's just miscellaneous works like weeding or wiping things with a cloth, they should be able to do it even without any skill."
"You're right, let's do that. Liza and Arisa, hire the children in front of the west guild, the rewards are one penny and a dinner. I guess 10 children should be enough? You can increase or decrease it as you want, I'll leave it to you two."

I accepted Liza's proposal, and asked them to hire more manpowers.

"Satou."
"What is it, Mia."

Mia pulls my sleeves from behind. She said that she wanted to go to the Mansion of Ivy, so we teleported to the carved seal board that had been put in the Ivy Mansion's hall for emergency. Since Pochi and Tama are still mowing the weed in the garden, Lulu stays behind in the mansion.

◇

"Leriril, cleaning."
"Misanalia-sama, to this abandoned house?"
"Nn."

Mia's business was about taking this Leriril here. She certainly has the [Cleaning] skill. She's a house fairy (Brownie) after all.

"Satou."
"What is it?"
"Become beautiful."

I didn't understand what Mia wanted for an instant, but I immediately realized it. She probably wants me to release the spirit light that I usually suppress. I don't really understand, but she probably has something in mind. I release it just like she asks.

"Nn, beautiful."

Leriril looked surprised, but Mia urged her to use magic.

"■■■■■■ ■■ …… ■■■■■■ House Cleaning."

After the long chant is over, the indoor becomes sparkling clean. I lift my foot out of curiosity as to what kind of magic is it, but the place where my foot is has also become clean.

>[Spirit Magic: House Fairy Skill Acquired]

Spirit magic type huh. Even though Leriril doesn't seem like she can see spirits, she can use spirit magic it seems. From Lua-san's talk, it seems that you can use the magic once you have Spirit Seer (skill), I wonder if Leriril got it from her race trait, or gift?

"You're great."
"I am grateful for the praise... However, I feel that the magic is more effective than usual."
"Nn."

The effect has increased probably thanks to the spirits that I've gathered, but since Mia doesn't look like she wants to explain it, I keep silent. It'll be boorish of me to do that if she's going to tell it as a surprise later.

Lulu rushes here from the kitchen with pitter-patter.

"Master, the floor suddenly sparkles! Ara? Lirerel-chan, welcome."
"Hey little girl! I've already said that I'm Leriril!"
"Ara, I've said that I'm Lulu, not little girl right. Have you already forgotten?"

These two don't get along well somehow. Leriril is like this with anyone but Mia, but it's rare for the gentle Lulu to talk in belligerent manner. According to Arisa, the reason was because of Leriril's impolite remarks to me, she said, "They'll probably get along well before long" optimistically.

"Next."
"P, please wait Misanalia-sama. Unlike elves-sama, our magic power are not much. Most of it has been used up for the magic earlier, so I cannot use big magic for a while."
"Nn, Satou."

After seeing Leriril who appeals with troubled face, Mia calls me. She probably wants me to use [Magic Power Transfer] to restore Leriril's MP. I restore her magic power as requested. Her magic power is certainly little compared to her level. It's even less than Lulu's when she's at the same level as her. I can't compare it unconditionally though since Arisa has twice the magic power of Lulu at the same level.

"Eh? Just now what? Did you do something? br-... Satou, sama."
"Mia requested it. I transfered my magic power to you."

Leriril murmured "Transfered magic power?" while looking perplexed, but, urged by Mia, she used various magic like [<<Clean-up House>>] and [Heal House], which made me want to quip, and made the house looks brand-new.

It's quite great.
However, I feel like I can't understand the fact that the floor that should have been rotted, and the wall that should have holes have been fixed--although it's not like I don't understand if I think of it as healing magic, house version.

I stopped Leriril who was going to clean the outside of the house, and left the outside dirty as it was.

"The roof leaks are troubling, but please leave the dirt intact. Since they don't seem to be common magics, it would make the neighboring people surprised."
"I can't comprehend what the human said. Even Misanalia-sama will certainly have a hard time."
"Nn."

Leaving aside Leriril's rude remark, shouldn't you deny it and ask her to keep the dirt instead of agreeing with her?
Nevertheless, Leriril completely cleaned and repaired every buildings according to my request.

I prepared a simple bedding in the first floor of the main building, and moved the debilitated children there. The skin of the children looked slightly reddish, so I cleaned them with [Soft

Wash] and [Dry], and then let them sleep on the bed. I give Nana change of clothes for these children and ask her to change their clothes.

◇

"Alright, we'ree heree."

Liza who's riding the horse, and Arisa who's sitting behind her have come back while leading around 20 children. Half of them are humans, while the rest are beastkins like ratkins, and rabbitkins.

"Welcome back, you're faster than I thought."
"Well yeah, still, aren't Pochi and Tama too diligent. There isn't any place where the children need to mow is it?"

I understand Arisa who's looking tired. The two have already mowed 80% of the weed on this wide plot.

"The small children are to wear gloves and baskets, and then gather the mowed weed into the basket! The big children are to wear gloves and grass sickles, and then cut the weed around the mansion! If you can finish it by the evening, Chevalier-sama will treat you to a delicious dinner!"

The children cheered in joy toward Arisa who cited the reward to keep their motivations up, and began to work.

"Ara? Isn't it Leriril. Since this child is here, that means the inside of the houses have been cleaned?"
"Arisa-dono, 'please stop calling me 'this child'', I've already said that much right!"
"Ah, sorry sorry."

While dodging Leriril's protest, Arisa opens the door to the mansion.

"Leriril good job! As expected of house fairy (brownie)! I'm astonished."

Arisa looks back with a gesture and heartily praises Leriril. Leriril seems to have a personality that's easy to get taken by the flow, she pridefully pushes her flat chest from the praise.

I send Leriril back with teleport magic since she can't be away from the Mansion of Ivy for long. We can just call her back for dinner.

The mowing is safely finished by the evening, and I give one penny for each children and treat them to a dinner as promised. I've decided to serve the meal in emergency-like lunch plates since there are no tables or chairs. Inside the lunch plate, I've put Gnocchi plastered with salty-sweet sauce and lightly boiled vegetables, salted potatoes, sweetened carrots, and the main menu is the diced wolf meat steak. I've made beans cuisine as Mia's main menu. Mia is still weak against [The Meat Dish] even now.

"Smell nice~"
"Un, I wonder what's that red thing? It smells sweet."
"That is meat. A lot of it."
"I wonder if we we will get it?"
"I'm hungry."

Since the children were only surrounding from a distance without taking the lunch plates, Arisa ordered them to line up. Since I've put priority into making the easy-to-make dishes, it shouldn't be that luxurious.

The children who have received the lunch plate begin to eat it in a rush. There are children who jam the food until they can't put it into their mouth anymore, there are also children who eat bite by bite to savor the taste. Strangely, there isn't anyone who say their impression about the taste. Everyone is too desperately eating it, they don't seem to have any room left to talk. However, I wonder if it's the default to have some children who eat while crying? Please eat it normally.

"Lulu has really improved her skill~"
"It's mortifying to say this, but this is delicious. To be inferior at cooking than humans, this is a matter of my dignity as a house fairy. The cooking skill of Arisa-dono's big sister is strange."
"Ara, Leriril. Our master is even better you know?"
"That br-, Satou-dono?"
"The castella from yesterday was made by master after all~"

Leriril whom we have called for dinner is eating beside Arisa. These two strangely get along well. I'd like her to get along with Lulu like that too.

The little children are licking their plates like they don't want to part with it after they've finished eating, so I slightly divide the meatful stir-fried vegetables I've made for the beastkin girls and give it to them. Every child looks like they'll eat anything presented to them, I stop them before they get stomach aches. Since Pochi and Tama look like they haven't had enough, I'll make them some late-night snack later.

Part 19 - Manager of the Mansion

Satou's here. Some kind of magazine wrote that if you're attracted to the word 'widow', that's the proof of being an old man. Although nowadays there are a lot of people who have divorced before they're separated by death, or people who become a single mother without a marriage, so it's no longer a familiar word.

◇

"Then, take care there."

I see Arisa and the others off in front of the west gate. Everyone is going to the villa in the labyrinth. I'm staying behind in order to find a manager for the mansion. Moreover, Nana is also staying since we can't just leave the debilitated children from before.

I remain until everyone disappear behind the gate, and then I head toward the Explorer Guild.

I was invited to a drink by the guild master after dinner last night, but maybe the guild was open for 28 hours as there were a lot of staffs and explorers despite being late at night. High level explorers and senior staffs who sensed the presence of a high-class liquor came to visit the guildmaster's room and demanded it, the dragon spring liquor that I had presented to the guildmaster disappeared in an instant. I overlooked the Brownie Wine that the guildmaster had hidden in the shelf out of samurai's compassion.

Maybe due to the party last night, I feel that there are only a few staffs.

I'm heading to the real estate department which referred the mansion yesterday. The young man from yesterday isn't there, instead, an old man with receded head hair is standing by while looking bored.

"Hello."
"Welcome to the guild real estate department."

He seems to be a more amiable person than I thought.

"It's about the mansion that this department has referred me yesterday."
"Does it have any inconvenience?"
"No, I'm looking for someone that could house-sit the mansion and stable hands for taking care of the horses, do you have any intercession department in mind that could help me."
"This Explorer Guild can be intercession that can find you guard or someone that will do odd-chores in your mansion, but it's better for you to look for someone you can trust to do something like house-sitting."

Does this person hate explorers despite being a staff of Explorer Guild?

"Yes, of course I won't say that all explorers cannot be trusted, but it's also the fact that

there are a lot of them who can't resist temptations before their eyes. For house-sitting, I think you'd better off asking your noble acquaintances to introduce you to someone, or hire a slave if you want it quick."

Noble acquaintance, the first who pops up in my mind is Viscount Shimen.
I don't know if he's still in the labyrinth city, but I try searching the wealthy area since he should be there. Unexpectedly, he's also in the same explorer guild. Come to think of it, he said that he was buying magic cores. The east guild should be the center for magic cores trading, but I guess the west guild is in charge of it?

Since his subordinate is waiting outside, I ask him for a meeting with the viscount.

◇

"Master, my name is Miteruna. I will do my best to serve under you despite my lack of ability, please take care of me."
"Please take care of me too."

The one who has politely greeted me is Ms. Miteruna whom Viscount Shimen has introduced for becoming the manager of the mansion. She's of human race, 26 years old, she can't be said to be beautiful, but her proportion is very slender. Although her stretched spine has a certain charm, her breasts-to-waist line is too straight. Her height is around 160cm, her long reddish light brown hair is knitted. Her reddish brown eyes are under her thin brows.
Her level is low at 7, and she has [Etiquette], [Service], and [Negotiation] skills.

Viscount Shimen immediately introduced her to me when I consulted to him. She's the eldest daughter of Viscount Shimen's villa manager family in this labyrinth city that has been doing it for generations. Her married brother seems to be current manager of the villa, so she's the so called excess personnel.
She was originally hired by the baronet by the viscount's referral, but she was relieved of her duty after she refused the baronet who was going to sexually harass her. I tried searching the city for a bit, and the only baronet in this labyrinth city is Baronet Dyuker. It's not like it's definite that he's a sexual harasser, but let's keep Nana and Lulu from getting close to the baronet.

"Rest assured, I'm the only man there. If I'm going to do something rude when I'm drunk, I don't mind if you hit me with nearby vases or chairs."
"No, I wouldn't do such thing."

I don't think I'd do something like that though, since I have a body that can't get drunk.
The cab carriage that we're riding has returned to in front of the Explorer Guild. I've come here to hire one or two children to become maids that will take care of the debilitated children in addition to the manager.

"Is it really alright for me to choose them?"
"Yeah, of course."

I nod to her question. The employment is going to be temporary anyway, and she's the one who's going to work with them.
She got off the cab carriage and came back bringing two older children whom she had chosen. The two girls look like some naive middle schoolers.

"He is Pendragon-sama who is your employer."
"I'm Roji."
"I'm Annie!"

The second girl who greets me in full spirit looks familiar. She was one of the children who came to the mansion to mow weed. She seems to be remembering the dinner yesterday, her slackened face looks like it's going to drool, Miteruna scolds her because of it. The first girl has dark skin, I don't know if it's tan, or if she's of different race. Either way, her limbs are thin like they're going to break.

The cab carriage can only hold two people, so the two girls are walking to the mansion on foot. They should be alright since it's only 30 minutes walk away.

I explain the facilities in the mansion to Ms. Miteruna. That said, since I only just bought it yesterday, it was over after I only showed the kitchen, the water well, the food storehouse, the toilet, the shed, and the stable.
I'm planning to have the rooms in the second floor of the main building for my party members' private uses. While at it, I also instructed her not to enter the basement since I'm going to use it for my study and also research room.

"It's a wonderful mansion. This is the first time I've seen one that has been so thoroughly cleaned and maintained. The previous master must be experienced."

I'm sorry for the Ms. Miteruna who's being astonished, but it was cleaned with Leriril's magic. Let's not say it out loud since she's admiring it and all.

I pass a small bag that contains some silver coins and gold coins to Ms. Miteruna. She's probably going to need some cash for buying fuel, miscellaneous goods and groceries.

"Umm, master. In case of noble mansion, it's possible to buy stuff with tabs, so there is no need to deposit such large amount of money to the employees like this."

Come to think of it, they were also using tabs for buying stuff in the duchy capital. Although she said 'large amount of money', it was only around 10 gold coins anyway, so I left it to her.

After Roji and Annie have arrived, Nana and I leave. It'd be troubling for me if they see us off, so I told them not to.

We teleported to the labyrinth behind the stable.

◇

"Go~ Ryu~" Nanodesu!"

Arisa and the othes arrived slightly late after Nana and I teleported into the villa. I receive Pochi and Tama who are behaving like spoiled kids and spin them around.

"Phew~ Teleporting this many people is tiring."
"Arisa great."

Mia is patting the head of Arisa who's acting like some kind of an old man, sitting down on the stump chair.

Arisa and the others were hunting in area 4 when I contacted them, so they joined late.

"Master, how is the issue?"
"Ah, I've employed a good person out of viscount Shimen's referral. She's a dependable looking woman on her late 20s."
"Is she married?"
"She seems to be a widow."
"Oh! The widow manager is here!"

I was telling Liza and Lulu about Ms. Miteruna, but Arisa was getting spirited up from [Widow] word.

"A bamboo broom, and an apron with chick pattern are the default aren't they."

No, although I understand the reference.

"It just needs an old dog, but I've never seen any dog after we've arrived in the labyrinth city."

Pochi points at herself, but Arisa shakes her head of course.

"Arisa, I'm sorry to pour cold water on your excitement, but Ms. Miteruna is extremely slender."

Arisa was blanked for a moment, but then her tension subsided like she understood what I mean.

◇

Nana blocks with her shield, while Liza shoots down the corns that are shot like a machine gun. I caught all the corns that were going to fly away behind with [Magic Hands]. These corns that are shot by the Walking Corn have hard shells, yet the inside are edible. There was no [~resisted the poison] on the log when I tried to eat it, so it's probably not poisonous.

Looks like Pochi has exterminated the monster this time. Her Heavy Blow skill has quite powered up ever since she learned Flickering Movement skill. She could possibly match Liza's blow after she becomes an adult, and her physique grows.

"Smells nice~?"

"Are you making something nodesu?"
"Hmm? I made pancake like thing since this seemed like corns."

"Mou, please stop making dishes behind people who are fighting. Our stomaches would ring."
"Nn, it rang."

I cut some slices, put maple syrup on it, and split it to everyone. It's a bit of snack.
Even though it looks like I could extract vanilla from the the Crawling Aroma Column (Vanilla Stalk) monster that we have defeated before this Walking Corn, I don't know how to do it so I'm hoarding it in the storage for the time being. If I can get my hand on vanilla, I can make more varied snacks. Vanilla Stalk was quite a powerful monster that could use Charm.

"Delish~"
"My cheeks are melting nodesu!"

It's not really fluffy, I should add some baking soda next time.

"Give me a bit more maple."
"Nn."
"Mou, I don't care if you two get fat."

Arisa and Mia ask Lulu who's in charge of maple syrup for more. I nod to Lulu who's looking at me with troubled face. It shouldn't have that much calorie if I'm not mistaken.

"Master, did you make this from the yellow beads of the monster from just before?"
"That's right. I make powder from that beads, and then add various things like eggs and sugar."

Nana is looking at the chick pattern that I've added on the back of the pancake. Since Arisa talked about chick apron just now, I made some adjustment to the heating magic tool, adding chick-patterned grilling surface on it.

"Master, this branding is peerless and wonderful. I recommend protecting it."
"I'll bake you some again later, so eat it."

Since Pochi and Tama seem to want second helping, I divide my share and give them half each. When I called them, they ran to me while having their mouths open, urging, so I cut big slices of the pancake and put it into their mouths.

Mia and Arisa mimicked them, opening their small mouths, but since my plate had been emptied, I threw candies into their mouth instead.

Now then, the reason why we can have snack time in the labyrinth is because the enemies are few. I thought that monsters would increase in the past few days, but only monsters around level 10 multiplied.

We have to trail-blaze into a new hunting ground to fight efficiently it seems.

Part 20 - New Hunting Ground

Satou's here. In net games like MMO, searching for a delicious hunting ground is one of its real thrill. Although with the growth of information exchanges on the internet nowadays, that joy only last several days after the update.

◇

When everyone was sleeping in the labyrinth villa, I went back to the mansion alone to check the situation, but there wasn't anything of note in particular. The children also seem to be healing nicely. I give nutrient supplements for to Ms. Miteruna.

Since Ms. Miteruna asked about greeting cards, I've decided to send it to not only for people in this city, but also for Nina-san in Muno barondom. I wanted to send the greeting cards to my acquaintances in the duchy capital and Bollhart too, but since there were too many people, I'll write to them when I have some free time.

I tell her that I'm going again until tomorrow morning, and head back to the labyrinth.
She asked me about my destination, but I ambiguously said that it was some minor business. During the tea parties in duchy capital, I heard that young nobles usually used such excuse when they were visiting women, so I imitated it.

◇

"New hunting ground?"
"Yeah, if we keep this up, the enemies in this area would likely die out tomorrow. Judging from the map, area 74 or area 109 look good. Area 74 is filled with amphibians and reptiles, area 109 is with insects."
"am-phi-bians?"
"What kind of monsters are they nanodesu?"
"Amphibians are like frogs. Reptiles are like snakes or lizards I guess."

There are cockatrices in area 69 that adjoins area 109. These monsters have high levels, there's even one at level 50. There are also high level basilisks in area 77 which neighbors area 74, it seems. Looking at the courses, the reason why there are a lot of monsters in area 74 and 109 is probably because the cockatrices and the basilisk are repulsing the explorers, so they can't go further in.

"There are many insects type monsters which have hard shells, so defeating them will take some time. I think area 74 with the amphibians and reptiles monsters is better here."

Liza suggests so with stiff face, but I didn't miss the glint in her eyes when she heard about the frogs. Pochi and Tama look happy about it, and the other members don't seem to object. If I'm not mistaken, a party called [Fang of Conflagration] was going to subjugate the cockatrices, so we can also avoid them if we go to area 74.

Let's pick a course where we won't encounter the explorers along the way as much as

possible. If we're about to bump with one, I can just carry Nana and fly to the ceiling with Sky Drive, and we probably won't get find out.

◇

"The corner over there~"
"Monsters are hiding nodesu."
"Wait a minute, I'll check the surrounding with space grasp magic--there are three Maze Centipedes. One of them is on the ceiling so be careful."
"I'll illuminate the ceiling with my light drop, so Mia-chan, fell it with your bow okay."
"Nn."
"Nana, provoke it."
"You centipedes! Don't think you're great just because you have a lot of legs, so I declare!"

I don't think centipedes have that in their minds.

One of the two centipedes that appear from the shadow due to Nana's provocation gets dropped to the ground by Liza's spear. Right after that, Pochi cuts off the centipede's head with her short magic sword.

Lulu illuminates the centipede that's on the ceiling with her light drop. An arrow that's shot by Mia with her small bow pierces the gap between the centipede's crust. Lulu is holding a magic gun on the other hand that's not holding the light drop, she skilfully shoots the roots of the centipede's legs. Lulu's marksmanships has become quite good.

Nana blocks the charging centipede with her great shield. The centipede vigorously climbed the great shield that it had rammed into and tried to attack, but Nana penetrates its head with her large sword from below. Furthermore Nana recites the Command Word [Tear] to activate the magic sword's special function, rupturing the centipede's head.

This [Tear] is a new feature that I've just experimented. I've put on thin membrane of force on the surface of the sword which will snap out with the command word. Since the eruption itself doesn't contain much power, I created the membrane to be in fine threads to increase its killing power, making it tear through the enemy's body from inside. Compared to [Shell], there seems to be a few situations where this can be used since if the enemy is soft, you'd be better off slashing with the sword normally.

The only one who didn't fight the centipedes, Tama, was dealing with the Goblin Assassin that was sneaking from behind. This monster is an assassin-type demi goblin that sneaks up from the shadow in narrow passages, they will launch surprise attacks from behind if you're careless. Even though their levels are only around 3-5, it seems 30% of explorers' deaths annually are caused by these Goblin Assassins.

"I guess it's around White 7 Vermilion 3? There's rarely any Red-grade magic cores like in area 17 huh."

Arisa is complaining while lighting the centipede cores with a light drop. From all the experience so far, it seems that the older the monster, the deeper the color of the magic

core tends to become. And it seems that the higher the level, the bigger its magic core becomes.

◇

Along the way, in a certain hall of area 1-2-21, we happened to pass by the party of miss Gina and miss Heliona that were fighting a Soldier Mantis. Soldier Mantises are weak monsters that are around level 13-18.

Although I've said hall, there are variations in elevation, and curtain-shaped screens are also hanging from the ceiling, so the field of view is bad. These curtain-shaped screens which I've seen here and there in the halls and corridors seem to be wreckages of spiderwebs that have accumulated dust.

The person who seems to be the party leader over there seems to have noticed us too, but it seems the leader doesn't intend to have a contact with us unless we get closer.

Those girls are in a party of 10 people, four in full-body metal armors, two in partial metal armors, and the other four are in leather armors.

Miss Gina is using a long spear instead of the flail from before, and she's attacking a monster from behind a heavy soldier who seems to be Miss Heliona. It seems she's injured as there's a bandage wrapped on one of her arm.

There's a single magician who sometimes shoots out firebolts from the furthermost behind. I feel that the firebolts often hit the magician's friends instead of the monsters, but it must be my imagination. The jeers must also be my imagination.

"Ugeh, that fire magician is terrible. The firebolt was aimed at the back of the vanguard shield-user."
"Affirmative. That magician is a dangerous pyromaniac, so I assert."

They should be able to win since there's only one opponent, but it'll be dangerous if there are many.

We continue without calling out to them, and join the beastkin girls who have gone ahead to the exit.

"Easy victory~?" "Nanodesu!"
"Master, we've collected the magic cores."
"Thank you. Then, let's go."

I receive the three Soldier Mantises' magic cores from Liza. I had asked the three to go ahead and exterminate a small group of Soldier Mantises that were coming from the passage. Since Pochi has a shallow cut on her cheek, I heal her with [Aqua Heal].

I put the remains of the Soldier Mantises besides the magic cores in the same folder in my Storage since they may be useful for something. I can also put it in Arisa's space magic

[Garage], but since it consumes large amount of magic power, we don't use it for now.

There are a lot of Mantis-type and Grasshopper-type monsters in this area 21. It seems they can be sold handsomely, largish parties are encamping in each halls of this area.

Looking at them when we passed by, every party didn't seem like they were fighting all-out, they always had reserves who weren't fighting.

I thought that they were taking safety margin, but I realized that they were taking precautions against something other than monsters after they warned me. It's probably not only against the lost thieves, but also explorers who should have been their companions. There might explorer parties with a bad manner who snatch the monster that the other have defeated after much hardship from the side.

◇

We discovered a body that's getting eaten by monsters in the main corridor that connects to the area where miss Gina and the others were just now.
I shoot [Short Stun] to tear the monsters off the bodies, and Arisa's firebolts burn down the Maze Cockroaches. Apparently, it's an easily burnable monster.

The body that were getting eaten by the cockroach monsters is of one of the person who's picking a quarrel with us in the West Guild, one of the friends of the man called Besso. I put the hair of the deceased and the bronze plates that Liza has collected into the Storage.

"Ugeh, maybe he got attacked from behind when he was running."
"Affirmative. I recommend children not to see this."

There's a crossroad ahead of this corridor, the left has Besso and one of his friend, and the right is a hall with a large-scale party of 20 people. The party are fighting monsters twice their number. Among them, there are two people from [Beautiful Wings], and the party of three beastkins from the ant-train incident.

Besso and his friend seem to be escaping without any monster pursuing them. Those two only have around 20% healths left, but since their life natures seem to be dirty, they will probably survive.

Rather than that, I'm more interested with the composition of the 20-people party. The five core members are around levels 15-18, but the other 15 are levels 5-10, they're somewhat unreliable to fight monsters in this area. Bluntly speaking, it's absurd. Even the cockroach that Arisa had effortlessly defeated just now was at level 12.

I don't want to leave acquaintances to their deaths, and our members can probably win unhurt, so I guess I'll intrude upon it.

I also thought about cleaning it up from a distant, but I decided to let everyone fight this time.

I'm not thinking that we should stop being inconspicuous, but we've already been conspicuous enough after getting the Red Iron promotion from the guildmaster. Showing everyone's abilities in front of other explorers, so that the surrounding recognize it sooner will probably decrease troubles.

Fortunately, since my true strength won't spread, people will think that I'm an incompetent noble who's surrounded by strong retainers, and I will become the target of threats or kidnapping instead. It might be nice to purposely let myself get kidnapped, and have Pochi and Tama save me afterward.

◇

"Satou, a fork."
"Yeah, there are 20 explorers who are fighting cockroach monsters like before to the right of the crossroad."
"Then, we should go straight?"

I usually let Liza or Arisa make a judgment from Mia's report, but I decide on the plan this time since people's life are hanging here.

"No, my acquaintances are there, and they will be annihilated if they're left alone so let's save them."
"Is it alright?"

Arisa asked since it wasn't like the usual me, so I told my thinking just now to everyone. Mysteriously, not just Arisa, every member is also enthusiastic to be in the situation where they save me from kidnapping.
Leaving that aside, since everyone has agreed, we proceed to the right on the crossroad.

"And, who are those acquaintances?"
"It's the female party and the beastkins from the ant-train incident back then."
"Wait you, I'm fine with helping them, but don't raise some strange flag okay."

How rude.

"I remember. Those vulgar people who were hugging master right."

I wonder what, Lulu looks somewhat dark.

◇

In the hall that we had arrived at, maybe the leader-shi was competent, there was no casualty despite the party being clearly in disadvantage.

They have already been cornered in one part of the hall though.
They're in perilous situation enough that if even one party member dies, they will be annihilated.

Now then, I'm sorry that it looks like we're waiting for our turn to show up, but let's let the cavalry out.

Part 21 - New Hunting Ground (2)

Satou's here. If it's too good to be true, then there must be something attached to it. There are some intricate frauds with not-really-good-to-be-true talk subtly mixed in nowadays, maybe it's for the sake of deceiving cautious people. And, even in another world, there are people who entice other people.

◇

"Mia, use your spirit magic to for illumination when I give you the signal. Arisa shoots the firebolt chantlessly toward the cockroach once Mia unleashes her magic. I will separate the cockroaches from the explorers while matching the timing of the firebolt's impact, so Liza, Pochi and Tama are to assault every cockroaches okay."
"Master, shouldn't we call out to them before we illuminate the hall?"

Liza raised her hand lightly, and gave an advice. That's true.

"We wouldn't want them to mistake us as lost thieves and attack us instead after we've gone the trouble of saving them after all."
"You're right. I entrust calling them to Liza. Mia should use her magic once Liza signals to her after she's made sure that the other party have acknowledged."
Arisa, I'm sorry, but after the first magic, don't use your magic chantlessly again, also, abstain from using space magic. Lulu too, since magic guns are conspicuous, please use only nature magic this time. Nana, you're with me house-sitting here."
"I'm dissatisfied in anger, so I complain."

Unfortunately, Nana has to persevere from her shield duty. After all, Nana and me shouldn't have been in the labyrinth.
I wait until everyone conveys their consent, and the strategy begins.

Cockroaches are encircling the explorers in the hall where they are located. We are just right on the flank of the cockroaches to begin the attack.

"We're『Pendragon』. We will help!"
"Oh, yer a big help!　If we survive this, I'll treat everyone of you in the bar!"

I thought that they would argue back, but the leader seemed to have promptly acknowledged our help. They must have been really quite cornered.

First, the light ball from Mia's spirit magic illuminates the battlefield from the ceiling. In no time flat, an explosion from Arisa's firebolt occurred in the center of the cockroaches. The cockroach that has been directly hit is blazing up, and the cockroaches around it are also burning.

I slip my [Magic Hands] in the explosion and hurl the cockroaches from the explorers to a place slightly away from them.

"Ugeh, disgusting."
"Mwuu."

I understand Arisa's and Mia's feels. I also agree. I didn't think that they would straighten up midair and began flying. As expected of cockroaches.

The three beastkin girls assault on the battlefield while leaving red traces of light from the magic edge.
It was a one-sided trampling.

The entire health of a cockroach disappeared with a single blow from Pochi's short magic sword. Tama's twin magic swords one-sidedly shaves away the cockroach's health with slashing attacks. Even though their health have been reduced by Arisa's firebolt, it's still quite something.

As for Liza, she cuts down the cockroaches on the ground with magic edge, and shoots down the flying cockroaches with magic edge cannon. She's the very embodiment of one-hit kill.

『Awesome, they're cutting down those hard shell like it's nothing.』
『Cih, I can do that much too if I only have magic weapons.』
『Imposs~ible. My mantis sword is also a magic sword, but as you can see what's happened.』

I pick up voices from the other party with Attentive Ears skill.

I had limited the cockroaches course so only as many as they could manage got close to them, so they now have room to converse.

Guessing from their conversations, looks like the monster-part weapon that the leader-shi is using is a magic sword. I didn't notice since it didn't have red trails of light. Since it seems that it's made from mantis-type monster, I'll try to create the same thing when I'm free.

◇

The vanguards aren't the only ones doing great of course, the rear guard, Arisa and the others are too.

"Fuhahaha! The cockroaches are like trash~ no~ the oily bugs they are, burning nicely~ now, once more. I'll go with Fire Circle this time~"

Arisa's tension is dangerous.
Nevertheless, it seems that she still has some sense left to chant the magic properly, and not get the beastkin girls and the other party members rolled up in her magic.

Arisa's showy firebolt and fireball are standing out, but Lulu's [Force Spear (Javelin)] is also steadily killing the cockroaches.
Since Lulu's magic power isn't as much as Arisa and Mia, every time her MP has diminished, I make her stop beside me, and I use [Magic Power Transfer] to replenish her MP.

Mia walked on the space that the beastkin girls and Arisa had opened, and began healing the explorers there. Unlike me and Arisa, Mia can't see the explorers' stats, so I use [Telephone] to instruct her to people that need to be casted with [Clear Poison] or [Water Heal].

『My pain is disappearing.』
『Oh, my wounds are healed, I can continue fighting now.』
『What's this, I can feel my numbed arms and legs again.』
『Me too.』
『Thank you! Magician girl!』

Mia was wearing her hood so the explorers didn't seem to notice that she was an elf, but since they could immediately discern her build, they seemed to interpret her as a girl, or maybe a kid. I couldn't see it from here, but I clearly understood that Mia was nodding while being embarrassed.

The charming-san from Beautiful Wing party seems to have gotten a direct attack from the cockroach, her upper body suffers from a big injury. Mia was going to heal her with magic, but they seemed to have used their clothes as bandages, the upper half of their bodies were exposed, it had become a sight for sore eyes. Mia seemed to have properly given them the mantles and shirts that I had asked Mia beforehand. They're just cheap things I've bought from Seryuu city long ago, but it's probably better than wearing nothing.

With Mia's magic, the explorers who have become unable to fight return to the battlefield little by little. Thanks to that, the battle over there is stabilizing.

Now then, the cockroaches extermination seems to be entering the end game.
The explorers with insufficient levels are also working in group and have successfully defeated a cockroach. Some of them begin to pointlessly chatter while fighting.

『That damn Besso, what kind of nice hunting ground is this.』
『Saying that stray maze cockroach comes out alone here so we can safely hunt it, damn him.』

I see, I thought that Besso had attracted the swarm to them, but they were taken by his cajolery huh.

『I thought I was going to die when so many of them were coming.』
『We're indebted to Pendragon huh.』
『As expected of the Red Iron Plate that guildmaster personally selected.』

I'm relieved that they're not holding some strange grudge like having their prey taken or something.

◇

Arisa and Mia have returned.

"Hey hey, the leader over there said that these many cockroaches don't usually come out

around this area."
"He said."
"Looks like it."

While checking the surrounding areas and corridors with the map, I replenish the two's magic power. Arisa repeatedly said [Flag]. And, in accordance to Arisa's request, a big game is coming.

"Arisa, according to my guess, a Gushing Hole will appear in the innermost wall from my standpoint in 4-5 minutes."

Okay okay with the "Flag, it's here!", just listen to me.

"It's a『Hunter Mantis』. It's a strong level 35 mantis-type monster, so be careful."
"Okay, I'll tell it to Liza."
"Nn."

While leaving the few cockroaches left to the explorers, Arisa and the others are preparing to intercept the expected point of the Gushing Hole. Everyone seemed to have drank stamina and healing potions as their various gauges have all restored to the maximum. Nana and me are moving to get close to Arisa and the others under the cover of the darkness.

The Hunter Mantis-kun that has appeared from the gushing hole is quite big. Its overall height is 5 meters, around as high as a two-story building. It's twice as tall as a Soldier Mantis. It's a bit of a Kaijuu isn't it. Unlike normal mantis, this one has a pair of sickle arms on each side, and 10 legs.

While thinking so, I use [Magic Hand] to prevent the Gushing Hole from closing. As expected, it won't close as long as there is some kind of obstacle.

After seeing that huge body, the explorers are rushing toward the hall exit--the place where we have just entered from--in a hurry. Looks like it barely hasn't become a panic since the leader-shi over there instructs them with loud voice.

The explorers have evacuated to the border of the main corridor, but several high-leveled ones are looking here. It seems that they intend to help if things get dangerous, but it looks like they understand that they will only drag us down, they don't seem like they're going to participate at the moment.

◇

"Pochi, Tama, this time Nana isn't participating. Pay attention to keep it from going toward the rear guard."
"Don't worry be happy~"
"Roger nanodesu!"

Tama got it wrong like usual, but she jumped back to avoid the sweeping attack of the Hunter Mantis' big sickle. With Flickering Movement skill, Pochi avoids the Hunter Mantis' leg

that comes trampling down from above.

Liza was trying to intercept the trampling Hunter Mantis' leg with her magic spear--but as expected, looks like it was impossible. The leg seemed to have taken some damage, but Liza's plan to deprive it of its leg didn't materialize.

"It won't get find out from this distance, so it's alright for me to mix some space magic in right?"
"Master, your permission to let me participate."

I agree to Arisa's wish. I also let Nana who looks bored to attack from behind Lulu's back. They use the same nature magic so it probably won't be exposed.

On top of having a hard body, the Hunter Mantis' height meant that only magic and Liza's spear could reach it, so they're having a hard fight.

Tama and Pochi were going to climb the Hunter Mantis' legs, but it kicked them, dropping them to the ground. It's rare for Tama to receive a direct hit.

"Ow ouch~"
"The mantis person is childish despite being huge nodesu!"

Yup, they're unhurt.

Their defenses have been strengthened. They would be severely wounded if they get directly hit by the big sickle as expected, but they seems alright if it's just a kick. Pochi has put her face guard on during the battle so I can't see her expression, but her big gestures is transmitting her indignation quite enough.

This time Liza pierced the magic spear from below the Hunter Mantis' abdomen, but since its abdomen was as hard as its shell unlike normal mantis, it didn't suffer much injury. Since it made it attack in rage like with the monster in a game instead, I feel that it's better for her to aim at another place.

"...■■ Flame"

The flame born from Mia's spirit magic burns the Hunter Mantis. Looks like it has resistance to it, it isn't damaged much.
Still, it seems to be feeling hot, the Hunter Mantis opens its back shell and spreads its wings, threatening us.

"Pochii!"
"Tamaa!"

The two who have sheathed their swords are going to do something behind the Hunter Mantis. Tama rushes to Pochi who has crouched while joining her hands--Jump! Combining the throwing power of Pochi, and Tama's own running jump power, Tama had splendidly landed on the Hunter Mantis' back.

Tama pulls her twin swords, and stab the defenseless back of the Hunter Mantis with them.

The Hunter Mantis closed its back shell in panic, but it was a bad move as it only made Tama's twin sword sink further. Making use of the spilled blood, Mia uses her [Balloon] magic to wrench open the back shell. Tama got thrown into the air from the force, but it was fine since she skilfully caught the back shell midair.

The defenseless back immediately fell prey to Arisa's [Space Destruction(Smasher)] magic and Liza's Magic Edge Cannon, decreasing the Hunter Mantis' health greatly. At this time, one of the back shell couldn't close anymore, maybe the tendon for opening and closing it was cut.

The physically reinforced Nana stealthily tosses Pochi towards that back.
After the flurry of Pochi and Tama magic edges dances, the Hunter Mantis finally used up all its strength, and collapsed to the ground.

"Big victory!" "Nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama raise their victory cries on the back of the Hunter Mantis. I can hear shouts of joy from the distant explorers.

Since I won't be able to collect the remain of the Hunter Mantis like this, I use [Magic Hands] to move it like a marionette and go away to beyond the Gushing Hole that I've left open. I collect the Hunter Mantis remain into my storage at the unseen place.

I tell Liza the plan for their exit with [Telephone], she will have to tell the explorers in my place. I also explain the plan to everyone.

"We will chase after the Hunter Mantis that has escaped! We will not come back here, so please go back to Selbira without waiting for us!"

After we all had entered the Gushing Hole, I closed the Gushing Hole behind.
There is no Sign Monument here, so we advance through the narrow corridor with the help of the light Mia's produced.

I've confirmed on the map that this has become the shortcut to the new hunting ground.
There are a lot of enemies, but they are all small fry, so we will probably arrive faster than planned.

Part 22 - New Hunting Ground (3) [Revised]

Satou's here. There are various abnormal statuses that appear in games like poison or paralyze. Even though abnormal status is hard to deal during the beginning of the game, since there are a lot of games where you get items that invalidate abnormal status during the endgame, I feel that it's become a mere trope.

◇

"What's that?"
"Don't look. It's the boss of the basilisks. You'd get turned to stone."
"Could it be, that's the Floor Master?"
"No, it seems that there's no Floor Master in the upper stratum."

There are few sign monuments around this area, so someone with normal eyesights can only see shades inside the hall.

The giant lizard fit to be likened to a hill is the master of Area 77, the [Mother Basilisk]. I imagined that it would vaguely look like a crocodile, but if I have to say, its appearance looks similar to a chameleon. It's about 7-8 meters tall, but the full body length is around 70-80 meters. If this hall didn't have nearly 300 meters long side, it probably wouldn't be able to move.

Beside this boss-like monster, there are around 10 10-meter class stone lizards (Basilisks) in this hall. The Basilisks' levels are in the first half of 30s, so they originally should have been just right to be opponents for everyone, but since their petrification is dangerous, I intend to pass through them.

"Master, are the basilisks the smoked meat that we were eating during the dwarves dinner party?"
"That was~" "Delicious nodesu!"
"It felt a bit sizzling on the tongue, but it went very well with sweet liquor didn't it."
"Mwu."

I feel they're implying that we should hunt them.

"I'll hunt 2-3 of them later, so don't get close to them okay."
"Is it because the petrification is dangerous after all?"

I answered "That's right" while nodding to Arisa's question.

"Petrivication~?" "Nanodesu?"
"Gufufufu~ Let me tell you~"
"Arisa is having an evil face nodesu! That's the sign of her trying to deceive Pochi nanodesu!"
"No~ way~ I'm really going to tell you."

Tama was pulling my clothes, so I looked back, and I saw a Lesser Basilisk crawling in hiding. I quickly fell its neck with [Flexible Sword] magic and put it into the storage with [Magic Hand] without moving it from its place. There's a possibility that the head still has the power to petrify like medusa in legend after all. It just so happened that there were several Lesser Basilisks and one Basilisk in our route ahead, so I killed them and put them into my Storage. I cut only one small-sized one into block sizes that will make it easy to smoke.

"Nyunyu~?"
"What's wrong nodesu?"

Tama puts both her hands on her head and puzzle over something.

"If it stares, stone~? Bacilisik can't play staring-game~?"
"That's bad nanodesu! Poor basilisk person, they can't play staring game nanodesu!"

You were worrying about such thing huh.

"Perseus did use mirror's reflection to turn Medusa into stone. Why don't you make shields with mirror surface and let us fight with it."

Why do you want to fight so much.

"Don't complain to me if your clothes and equipment get petrified and you have to fight bare naked."

Leave the "get stronger every time you takes off your clothes" power to the oversea ninja alone. Moreover, I can see your era when you look at your own body, take a strange pose and then wink, so please stop it.

◇

The area 74 that we've finally arrived at is composed of 10 big halls and 30 small rooms that are connected. We were able to substantially cut the time it takes to get here thanks to the shortcut that connected the roaches room to the Basilisk area.

The first hall is the frogs area that's half-submerged in water. There are many megaliths covered in moss on the surface, while algae and water plant are floating on the water surface on the shore. A large lotus-like leaves have grown on the water surface in the center of the room, a lot of small insects are flying near the water plant. They seem to be normal insects as they have no particularly strange effect.

Swarm of bats are crowding near the ceiling. These bats seem to be monsters, but since their levels are in single digit, let's leave them alone unless they come attacking.

It seems that there's a hidden room in the depth of this area, let's make it into our personal Teleport Point.
After I've finished the general check, I permit Liza and the others to fight.

"Then, Tama, lure some reasonable monster."
"Aye aye sir~"

Tama erases her presence, moves between the megaliths, drawing closer to a Rock Frog that's sleeping on the shore. She attacks the Rock Frog from behind a megalith with a magic gun. Just like monsters in games, it shouldn't have been able to notice the first attack, but it seems that the Rock Frog's view is wide as it seems to have discovered Tama.

It's jumping with its body like a frog would, and Tama avoids it by using some obstacle. Vibration shakes whenever the frog lands. While not letting the frog caught up to her, Tama brought it to the place where everyone had readied their battle formation. There's only one frog that has come. Since it doesn't seem to have a link, my turn is none.

"You frog! Drop that thick skin of yours and live in humility, so I declare!"

Pulled by Nana's usual incomprehensible provocation, the Rock Frog changes its target from Tama to Nana.

The Rock Frog is only four meters tall, but it seems to be quite heavy. Its outer skin is covered in blue rocks, looks like it'll be hurt to normally strike on it with swords. Its level is 34, and looks like it can spit out deadly poison in bullet forms.

Since I've already lectured those, everyone besides Liza has used [Shell] to protect their swords' blades.

Nana blocks the charge of a body that weight God-knows-how-many tonnes. Nana retreats back after yielding to its weight, but it's only for several meters. Nana seems to have nicely used nature magic to put spikes on the soles of her shoes.

"Flame charge nanodesu!"

With the combination of Arisa's fire magic and Pochi's physical reinforcement, she assaults the rock frog's flank like a cannon by combining Flickering Movement and Heavy Blow. The heavy body of the Rock Frog floats for an instant from the blow of small Pochi.

Arisa invokes the space magic [<<Dimension Piles>>] during that short moment, many penetrate the Rock Frog's belly. The dimensional stakes seem to pierce deeper due to the frog's own weight. She's cleverly used the opponent's weight against itself.

Lulu holds a magic artillery beside me and attacks, aiming at the Rock Frog's big eyes. The Rock Frog's eyes seemed to be protected by glass-like transparent shell as it had only dazzled for a bit even after receiving the huge bullet of the magic artillery.

From the opposite side, Liza who has activated magic edge is stabbing at the frog while aiming at its eyes and flank. Tama unleashes flurry of attack from magic edged twin magic swords on the wound under the frog's skin that Pochi has opened.

The Rock Frog is flinching, as maybe it has never received such one-sided attacks like this

before. It was going to spit out venom bullets in desperation, but Nana who has promptly sensed it stopped it with [Remote Stun] of nature magic. The venom that it was going to spit out stopped in its mouth.

Mia invokes [<<Water Shredder>>] magic in its mouth, the Rock Frog suffers great damage from the poison that it has secreted itself. Is it suffering from the poison, or is the wounds hurt, it's attacking randomly with its tongue, and Nana splendidly handles it with her magic sword and great shield.

In the end, Liza settled it with Spiral Spear Attack, and the Rock Frog dropped down on the ground.
Pochi and Tama who usually do victory cries vigorously come beside me instead.

"Smells nice~?"
"Is it done nodesu?"

I'm making pickling sauce for the Basilisk meat from before. Since Arisa was complaining before, I've used (Air Control) to make the wind blows the other way and don't let the smell reach the battlefield.

"Not yet. After this sauce has cooled down, the meat has to be pickled in it and be left overnight."
"Unfortunate nanodesu."
"Looking forward, tomorrow~"

Right at that time, Liza came back while carrying a big red magic core, and lump of frog meat that should easily weight dozens kilograms.

"I have retrieved the hind legs that haven't been poisoned. I think it's better to not eat the torso meat."
"I'm sorry."
"Don't mind~"
"There are still a whole lot more frogs, so it's alright nanodesu."

Mia dejectedly apologizes for exploding the poison. The beastkin girls didn't seem to be angry, they cheered Mia up.

I take out the barbecue set that I've put into the storage beforehand, and begin grilling the frog meat. Although we've only just begun the hunt and it's still a long while until lunch, I've decided to start the lunch early since the hungry call is likely to occur.

The frog meat is too large to grill it just like that on the mesh, so I cut it into some palm-sized thick slices. The smell of the burning from the dipping meat juice spreads to the surrounding. I'm grilling two types of meat; one that's ordinarily seasoned with salt, and one that's smeared with the marinade for the smoked meat from just before.
I also grilled vegetables for Mia, and warmed the corn pancakes from before. It's quite chaotic with the smell of burning honey even mixing in. I regulate the air with Air Control to prevent the smell from getting mixed.

"Stupid delish~?"
"Grilled stuff is the strongest nanodesu!"
"It's softer than I thought, but it's truly delicious with the abundant meat juice. The meat that's grilled with sauce tastes salty-sweet, but it's growing on you isn't it."

Pochi and Tama are holding frog meat on iron skewers on both their hands and fully enjoying the barbecue while alternately biting on it. Liza is talking heartily she seems really happy. Nana uniformly chew on the meat and the vegetables. Mia still has different menu than everyone even now, but she's moving her small mouth with all her might to eat.

Arisa and Lulu are eating normally as they seem to have gotten used to monster meat recently. Particularly Lulu, she's trying various sauces on small slices of meat. She's not only doing it for herself, she also asks Liza and the others to try it, looks like she's adjusting the difference between their palates.

◇

After the meal short break, the hunt resumes.
We continue the hunt while I'm regulating so that no dangerous situation arise.

I was planning to have us rest in the Mansion of Ivy in the night because it had been a while since our last series of battles against high-level enemies, but since Arisa said some strange remark, "Labyrinth-feel will disappear", I decided to have us stay at the labyrinth villa in area 17 like yesterday.

There's no "Labyrinth-feel will disappear" even though we stay in the safe villa with bath.

Part 23 - Residences of the Mansion

Satou's here. I randomly imagine about some bizarre event when I look at a western-style house during the popularity of a genre called 'Mansion'. I also remember that there are many (games) where the mistress of the house is the mastermind for some reason.

◇

Now then, two days after we set the carved seal board in the new hunting ground--area 74, we decided to go back to the mansion. I went back to the mansion once every day with [Return] to see the situation there, but since Arisa and the others wanted to see Ms. Miteruna, they're currently going back through area 4. The reason why they didn't return the day after that was to hide the space magic. It would be strange if they got back earlier than the explorers who were exterminating the maze cockroaches when they should have been behind, so we delayed it by one day.

Nana and me directly teleport to the mansion ahead of them. We're teleporting to the stable. I've confirmed that there's no one beside the horses. They're good horses for not being surprised to us who appear suddenly. I've decided to give them special-made feed as the reward. It's a new one that's added with smashed corns.

We leave the stable and head to the main building. The girls who were working on the garden seemed to have noticed us and came to us. They're called Roji and Annie if I'm not mistaken.

"Welcome home, Chevalier-sama."
"Welcome home."
"Ah, I'm home."

The radar caught on Ms. Miteruna who seemed to have noticed the two's cheerful voices and then went to the entrance hall.

I've already confirmed the situation of the children and Ms. Miteruna with [Clairvoyance] magic. Although I can't say that they've opened their hearts, they've become better.

"Welcome home, master."
"I'm back, did anything happen during my absence?"
"Yes, two letters have arrived."

In the living room, I'm listening to Ms. Miteruna about the visitors and events here during my absence.

The letters are from Viscount Shimen and Marchioness Ashinen. It seems the Viscount is going back to the duchy capital the day after tomorrow, so he's inviting me to a dinner tomorrow.

Marchioness Ashinen invites me to a tea party the noon of the day after tomorrow. It

seems that the wifes and daughters of Selbira's influential nobles regularly attend the tea party. Since personal connections helped me a lot in the duchy capital, I wrote the acceptance letter and gave it to Ms. Miteruna.

Oh right, I remembered about the letters.
I hand over the remaining bundle of the greeting letters that I've written last night to Ms. Miteruna. She looked slightly surprised due to the bundle's thickness. These are for my acquaintances in the duchy capital and the dwarves in Bollhart. I've written the shares for princess Menea's at the royal capital, and the viceroy's daughter Ririna's too of course.
I've also written our present condition besides greeting formalities for Sera and the people whom I'm close to.

Unlike for faraway place like Muno Barondom, there are merchant caravans that regularly go to the royal capital, and then airships can go from the royal capital to the duchy capital, so passing the letter is also easy. The dwarf hometown is slightly too far, but since there are merchant caravans that regularly go there from the duchy capital, it should be fine.

◇

The children whom we've saved have recovered enough to do simple chores, thanks to the nourishments and magic potions. After they've restored their muscle strengths later, they should be alright.

By Ms. Miteruna's advice, the children's beds have been moved to the servant building from the main building.

The reason why those children were in such place was because they wanted a kind of grass that were growing in the stable. The fruits of the grass called Tami Poppy seems to be very bitter, but it can be used as painkiller. However, it contains slight toxin, so when someone ingests it in large quantity, their consciousness will become turbid and lethargic.

They needed such painkiller due to the injuries they had gotten in the labyrinth. For baggage carriers who have bone fractures especially, their only choices are either selling themselves to the slave trader or die a dog's death. The slave trader had given up on these children. Since getting saved like in this case seemed to be quite rare, the children were extremely grateful.

That's not the reason of me wanting to employ these children as the mansion's servants though. This mansion needs various helping hands since there are magic tools in this mansion unlike the mansions of the duchy capital nobles, so this is just right.

"Then, are you going to let them stay in the mansion?"
"They don't seem to have any aim even if we let them go. Could you teach them how to work little by little?"
"I accept. I will bring them up into excellent maids."

Ms. Miteruna reassuringly accepted it. Quite reliable.

"Right, how much do people usually pay children for labor?"
"You don't have to pay them if they live in."

According to her, in exchange of not paying them until they grow up, you have to guarantee their food, clothing and shelter. If you're going to hire them after they've grown up, the common payment is one silver coin, although it also depends on their ability. The payment is not for a day worth. It's for one month. Of course the sum will go up when their job description increases, or their ability improves.

By the way, Ms. Miteruna's wage is one gold coin a month.

"Master, please give the children clothing and footwear if you're going to employ them. You don't have to give them something expensive, but if you let them wear old rags and be bare footed, people will doubt the family status of Pendragon house."

Worrying about family status of a house that's just been established for several months is one thing, but I do want to give them clothes and footwears.

"I understand. Buy them 2-3 clothes including for changes. If the money I've given before isn't enough, should I add it?"
"No, if master allow me use one silver coin from the money that has been given to me, it should be enough for old clothes and strings. Changes for underwear are needed, but it's enough to give them one clothes each. If their treatments were too lavish, the servants' attitudes would become arrogant--"

Ms. Miteruna gently reproved me. I intend to tailor maid uniforms for them later, is that bad too?

"Tailoring matching clothes for the servants is it? Having matching maid uniforms do happen in grand nobles' mansions, but only in big cities like the royal capital and the duchy capital, there is no mansion that does such thing in this savage labyrinth city."

It just doesn't exist, not prohibited, so I've decided to present maid uniforms to the children when they've become able to work their own job.

◇

Arisa and the others have returned. For some reason, she contacted me with [Telephone] when they just came out of the labyrinth gate. Looks like they've been surrounded by explorers, and can't move.It seems they will handle it appropriately and go back here.

Arisa and the others arrived one hour later.

"We were crowded, it was terrible you know. They're holding party celebrating the safe return in the tavern tonight they said. Master was also invited."
"Understood. I'll go with you since I don't have any plan tonight."

She hands me a small sack with cash while grumbling. The payment from the sales of magic

cores and materials is a bit much. It seems the leader of the roach extermination party has given the magic cores payment for the roaches that we exterminated.

"He apologized that he couldn't bring back most of the roach's material since they didn't bring baggage carrier."
"What kind of things can be made from roach's material?"
"Dunno? Maybe roach armor and helmet?"

Looks like she's not really interested, Arisa absentmindedly replies.

◇

Now then, I gather Arisa and the others and the servants in the hall, and let them introduce themselves to each other.

By the way, the dying children are all human girls, and their names are Junni, Aina, Kitona, Suna, Teriona, and Hoho from the eldest to the youngest. I thought that they were ugly since the slave trader abandoned them, but every girl looks normal although plain. Their hair are all cut in short cut or bob cut since the grooming is hard.

"Then, everyone besides Nana-sama and Mia-sama is a slave?"
"Yeah, I'd like to release Arisa and Lulu but I can't since there's a bit of circumstance. I would immediately release Liza and the others if they wish so though."

I answer Ms. Miteruna's question with a bitter smile.
They've obtained Red Iron Plates after all, they're already fine enough to be released anytime. I have to seriously research the way to release the enforcement (Geass) once Arisa and the others have leveled up enough.

"Master, our wishes are to repay the favor to master. Please use us as slaves as it is."
"Unneeded child~?"
"Please don't abandon me nodesu."

They said similar things like when I was going to release them in Seryuu city back then. How about retainers instead of slaves?

"You're not unneeded child. What about becoming my retainers, not slaves?"
"Retainerrs~?"
"Everyone becomes a retainer nodesu?"
"Arisa and Lulu have to wait a bit though."
"Can we do it together~?"
"Then we do it together nodesu."

Arisa puts her arms on Pochi's and Tama's necks and shouts "Cute~ mou!" while swinging around. Lulu also looks really happy.

"Right! Since they're going to be employed here, how about teaching them letters?"
"You're right, can you lend them that learning cards?"

"Aye" "Nanodesu!"

I agree on Arisa's suggestion. The later words were from Pochi and Tama. Since they're OK with it, I ask Arisa to teach the children and Ms. Miteruna the way to play the learning cards. Ms. Miteruna looks really puzzled while saying "Teaching letters to commoner children?"

"That's right~ All members of team『Pendragon』can read, write and calculate after all."
"Th-these children too?"

Pochi and Tama who are pointed by Ms. Miteruna answer "Of course~", "Nanodesu!" and begin reading picture books out loud. They have to properly stop at the punctuations though.

I asked the senior group that are Lulu, Liza and Nana while Arisa was lecturing the way to play the learning cards.

◇

I'm absorbed in reading a book on the chair that I've put under the tree on the courtyard.
It's a dummy of course.

In actuality, I'm currently investigating the experiment for Living Armor's source of power. The prime candidate is the magic power vessel (battery) like the scarecrows use, but since it needs special material like world tree's sap, I want something more generic.

Suddenly, I thought about the holy sword and the wooden magic sword that had been filled with magic power.

Right, filling things with magic power itself is possible even without using special material like world tree's sap. The problem are the storage capacity, period and also efficiency. Now then, let's look for some usable circuit for it.

Lulu calls out to me as if she's seen through that I've decided on the rough objectives.

"Master, how about some tea?"

Lulu is carrying a glass goblet with blue tea inside. It's a cold tea that's proper with the TPO.

"Thank you, did you cool it with life magic?"
"Yes! Using magic is really convenient."

Lulu who's talking to me while smiling with her whole face is dazzling. Her magic capacity has increased with her level so she's become able to freely use the magic.

It might be a good idea to teach the children life magic and compounding after they've learned to read and write.
While thinking such thing, my mind goes back to the magic tool study.

Part 24 - Explorers

Satou's here. I remember about being surprised to see the figure of someone scooping the egg yolk of a boiled egg with a spoon in some kind of movie long ago. I've already forgotten the rest of the movie, but for some reason, only that scene leaves a deep memory.

◇

"Then, thanks for everyone from『Pendragon』for their rescue! And for our safe return, today let's drink the night away!"
""""YEAH!""

The feast begins with the leader-shi's greeting. His name is Koshin, and he seems to be the leader of a veteran explorer party called [White Horse Mane]. Gathering multiple parties and then going to the labyrinth deep like this time isn't their first time.

The party is located on the square where stalls have gathered ahead of the street with bungalows that's 300 meters to the east of the west gate. Around 30 food stalls and 10 drink stalls are lined up. The light from the stall signs are bright. Apparently, life magicians are using magic to illuminate it.

Besides us, there are also other explorers and day laborers-like people like carries who are enjoying the food and liquor from the stalls. Among them, there are young ladies with sensual clothes and strangely sexy young men here and there, sprinkling their charms. Either of them seem to be prostitutes.

One section of the square has been occupied today. It seems they've reserved one liquor stall, and three food stalls for the party.

There are no chairs and tables, it seems we're going to eat and drink in a circle, sitting on the ground. Lulu and Liza have put a sheet on the corner for the place we're sitting now.

The menu for this party this time are grilled meat, dried meat, boiled beans, and boiled potatoes. They're probably not shabby since Koshin-shi said teasingly "These are some feast" before the party began.

"Magician-san, thank you for the clothes that time."
"Mwu?"

The two people from [Beautiful Wings] come to Mia while carrying something that look like folded clothes. Since Mia who looks troubled seeks help from me, I act on it.

"Please have those clothes if it's fine with you. If you expose too much skin, bad bugs could come after all."

The two are forced to wrap few cloth on their body, so although they can hide the important places, their shoulders and stomaches are bare, it's quite sensual.

"Is it alright?"
"Thank you very much, Chevalier-sama."

The two must have been embarrassed, they readily wear the cheap shirts. They leave the mantles folded since it's hot.

◇

"Hard~"
"This meat person is quite tough nodesu."
"Haha, chibi-chan, you won't chew it if you eat like that. You thin it with a knife and then eat it."

Pochi bite through the meat with a 'pssh' sound. The man who seems to be the stall owner that gave her the advice looks at her in wonder.

"Is it tendon meat?"

Lulu cuts a thin slice of the meat, puts it on a plate, and passes it to me. I chew that meat on my mouth, it's hard alright. It could be softened if it was boiled in a pressure cooker. With some peculiar bad smell, it's hard to say that it's delicious, but it's also not bad enough to make you vomit, it's a delicate taste.

"This might be not to noble-sama's palate since it's monster meat."
"Insect meat is cheap after all, and you get used to it when you eat it everyday."

Looks like these grilled meat and dried meat are made from insect-type monsters. It's a meat that's pitch black before it's even grilled, and it's as tough as tendon meat of animals. As to what kind of insects they are, even the explorers only call it [Insect meat] or [Meat] since the stocks change everyday. It's extremely cheap, one skewer of the meat only cost one penny.

"When I've just become an explorer, I often follow along a strong party from behind and collect the meat of the monster after they've finished stripping it off the materials."
"Although it did become cash, it was quite nasty huh."

It seems there are a lot of explorers who only collect the shells or the claws that can become money from insect-type monsters, and then there are also explorers who specialize in collecting the meat from the leftover. The people who collect such monster meat are called [Corpse Retriever (Looter)], and seen as the lowest. What a strange story considering it's a fine job that supports meals like this.

Some young explorers are exhibiting sword dance-like acrobatics in the center of the explorers circle. When that was over, Pochi and Tama came to the center.

"Pochii!"
"Tamaa!"
"Tou!"

I wonder if someone incites them, they're demonstrating the jump like the one they've done to the mantis' back. Whoomph, toward Tama who's jumped five meters above, cheers are coming from the surrounding.

Nana caught the fallen Tama. Pochi and Tama, and also the spectator who plead the two to do the jump were scolded by Liza since they made dust enter the meals, they were downhearted.

◇

"These beans and potatoes are soft."
"Nn."

There are a lot of vegetables even though it should be expensive in the labyrinth city.

"These are also monster meat though."
"These are not the meat part you know. They're from the bodies of plant-type monsters called Walking Bean and Hopping Potato."

Looks like these beans and potatoes are taken from monsters. The labyrinth isn't only a mine, but also a ranch, and a farm is it.

I tried eating them a bit, and it seemed that these beans and potatoes are a bit different than normal ones. The bean has hard rind, and peculiar grass smell. There are white fibers that looks like of orange inside, this part is a bit bitter. When I chipped off the part, and then spooned the inside and ate it, it tasted like normal beans.

"As expected of noble-sama. You're refined~"
"Maybe I also should use the spoon?"

Oops, I didn't mean to look refined. Even though I only wanted to take the inside and tasted it, I got some strange admiration instead.

The potato has thin sweetness of potato and stickiness-like taste of taro. They told me that the violet part inside the potato is poisonous so I shouldn't eat it. Although it seems that it only causes upset stomach, there's no danger to life.

The <<Walking Bean>> is a 30 centimeters tall pod with arms and legs, and there are 2-3 beans inside the pod after you defeat it. Since it's four times as big as normal broad beans, it seems you can earn a penny from 20 of it.

The Hopping Potato is a strange potato-type monster that's jumping around with spiral spring, it's as big as the Walking Bean. You can get as much as 10 kilograms potato from one monster. Since one kilo is one penny, you can get some money from it.
A middle-aged spearman told me that you could easily defeat them by just readying your spear since they attack by ramming themselves. This man has been passionately talking about Liza and spears since a while ago.

Both are area 14 monsters, and explorers who have lost competition for monsters in the big first area often hunt them. Curiously enough, these two monsters either don't give experience at all, or give extremely little. They're monsters no doubt since they have magic cores the size of a rice grain, but it seems that there are people who don't level up despite hunting them for a year. Therefore, they tell me the theory of poor explorers, that is to earn income at the area until you have enough money to buy equipments and then move to another area.

"Now, now chevalier-sama. Let's pour you some."
"Thank you."

I taste the ale that I've received in the cup. It's sour and bad. It tastes like diluted beer mixed with vinegar. According to him this is a luxurious item, everyone is drinking deliciously. The alcohol strength feels less than 5%.

"Ara, Chevalier-sama, you can't drink ale with such refined manner! You have to drink it like, so, in one gulp!"

Looks like the beauty-san of [Beautiful Wings] changes when she drinks liquor, she passionately speaks the way to drink ale.

I've forbidden our members from drinking alcohol since it would be chaotic like before otherwise. Everyone is drinking fruit water that I've brought.

There are also some small barrels of wine and spirits among those, and then the contest quickly happens not long after the start of the party. Although those liquor were just normal things that I bought from liquor store along the way here, it was good that they happily received it.

The patrolling soldiers in red hard leather armor came just 3-4 hours after the sunset. They ordered us to dismiss in loud voice since there is a restriction for doing business late at night in this city.

Since I can't leave the completely wasted [Beautiful Wings] and I don't know their addresses, I've decided to let Liza and Nana carry them to the mansion. The guest room is vacant, so they can just sleep there.

We told our thanks to Koshin-shi who couldn't even articulate words properly from his drunkenness and went back to the mansion.

◇

"We have troubled you greatly yesterday."
"We're very sorry."

The [Beautiful Wings] apologized for last night while enduring the headaches from the hangovers. They don't usually drink themselves that bad in the bar, but they went overboard last night since Koshin-shi was treating. I offer them magic potions for hangover, and invite

them to breakfast.

They were deeply moved at the breakfast that Lulu had cooked, maybe it suits their taste. Lulu who looked proud while being bashful from the praise was impressive.

I've heard in the party yesterday, their fine for the ant-train case is two gold coins for each. It seems they have loaned money to pay it, but the debt increases by 30% every 10 days, and they will be sold as slaves if they can't pay the interest every month. I think that's quite an usury, but if I think about the high mortality rate of explorers who die in the labyrinth, it might be appropriate.

I offered the two to let me take over their debts.
Of course this isn't out of sympathy.

Briefly speaking, this is a part of the measure for the labyrinth city orphan plan. Arisa and I racked our brains lately for this problem, and we concluded that training baggage carrier children who want to become explorers in the labyrinth to become full-fledged explorers is the quickest.

They should become able to sustain themselves once they reach levels to an extent, and if they want stability, I could refer them to become soldiers or subordinates of Baron Muno in his territory.

The former baggage carrier children who have become full-fledged explorers then can raise the next generation children and it becomes a nice loop.

The problem with the rearing is if it follows our training regime, they will level up without even getting the minimum knowledge. As the result, they would grow arrogant, careless and thought that they wouldn't die.

Then I heard the story about their debts when I was searching for teachers, so I scouted them.

These girls should be qualified as they've gone through hardships as explorers. These two should be enough for the meantime, but since the three beastkins from the ant-train case should also be suffering from the interest rate, let's think about increasing personnels soon.

I can't lead Arisa and the others for the next two days. During that period, I'll ask everyone to train these two.

<author's>

Part 25 - Explorers (2)

"Then, we will be going."

I inform Master so, and then leave the mansion behind.
Master is going to attend Viscount-sama's banquet, and Lulu has promised to teach the children how to cook and read, so they're going to stay.

This time, there are two female explorers, Iruna and Jenna in places of Master and Lulu. Although they're only as strong as normal soldiers, they've been given complete set of ant shell armors, one-handed swords, and shields by Master. They should be fine fighting against slightly higher leveled enemies.

"Then, during the time Chevalier-sama isn't here, the leader is Nana-san right?"
"In charge of battle command is Liza, making judgment during complex situations is Arisa, so I inform."
"Hee, is that so. Please take care of me, Liza-san."

I nod back to Iruna who talks to me sociably. Her way of talking sounds a bit like a man's.

"Then Arisa, what kind of place is area 11 we're going to today?"
"Eh! We're going to area 11?!"
"That is the plan, is there any problem?"

The black haired woman called Jenna cut herself between my conversation with Arisa. According to Arisa, she seems to be beautiful.

"Area 11 is a place full of troublesome monsters like Horn Hoppers or Rockhead Bees isn't it."
"That's right. You know your stuff."
"That's because that place is infamous in a bad way. There are a lot of monsters in the area so desperate explorers who have their prey taken sometimes go there, but most are either dead or receive injuries beyond recovery and retire."

I see, it's formidable. I've heard some good things. I look forward to it.

"Horn Hoppers and Rockhead Bee are certainly hard, but they're easy to handle since they go straight at you."
"Is it really? I guess it's easy for the people who defeat that giant『Hunter Mantis』?"
"That's right! If you're going to ride the big ship, hop aboard now."

Arisa is the right person to wipe off anxiety from this party after all.
Still, I wonder where did Arisa get information about Horn Hoppers and Rockhead Bee. She must have heard it from Master doesn't she?

◇

"Ara? Liza-san, are we not buying oil for hand lanterns?"
"There is no need."

The inside of the labyrinth is bright enough to not be a problem during battles anyway, and Mia can use her magic to put out light in places without a Sign Monument. Moreover, we also have Light Drops.

"Can we stop by the guild for a bit? I'd like to replenish hemostasis ointments since we've run out of our stock."
"It's unnecessary. Mia can also use healing magic, and we'll give you some magic medicines once we enter the labyrinth."
"Ma-magic medicine? R-really? That's like one silver coin for one bottle right?"

I notice that my own sense of money has been numbed while nodding to her.
I've been using them readily since Master has given them readily, but I feel that I have to be economical on it.

"Your life is more important you know. Our Master really dislike it if someone he knows gets hurt. That's why, don't think that you have to save on it okay?"

Arisa advices while sending her line of sight toward me with upturned eyes as if she's read my mind. That is right, our Master is such kind of person.

"How about luminescent stones, or smoke balls and flash balls?"
"Nn~ we have the latter two from Master, but what does luminescent stone do?"
"You drop them on the junctions of the labyrinth. Although it stops glowing in three days, we should not lose the way back to the starting location if we drop these stones."

I see, since we are usually bestowed by Master's perfect guidance, we never leave traces behind. However, it seems to be quite a useful item.

We buy the item in the guild and put it into the magic bag <<Holding Bag>> that master has entrusted. Master has warned us not to use our Magic Pouch in public.

"Eh! Does Liza-san has Item Box skill?"
"No, this bag is a magic tool."
"T,there's that kind of tool huh. As expected of people employed by noble-sama."

These two are a bit noisy aren't they. Please follow Pochi's and Tama's examples. The two are being carried on Nana's arms, hanging quietly.

◇

"They're coming, four Rockhead Bees."
"You worker bees! You are not good just because you're solid, so I declare!"

The four Rockhead Bees are rushing to Nana who's set up her great shield. These Rockhead Bees are monsters that have heads as sturdy as rocks. Master is not here today, so I cannot

recklessly use magic edge. Let's go at it steadily, this is not because of Nana's provocation.

"Pochi, Tama, avoid attacking the hard heads and aim for the gap on their necks."
"Aye aye~"
"Roger nanodesu."

I move to the side of the flying bee with Flickering Movement, and thrust my spear on the gap between its rock-like shell. It seems to be a fragile monster, the head separates from its body with just one blow. Pochi and Tama had defeated them without any problem too.

"Nana! Don't kill that one, drop it to the ground."
"Understood!"

Nana blocks the last one with her great shield, and then knocks it down to the ground as instructed by Arisa.

"Iruna, and Jenna, attack that Rockhead Bee."
"Is it alright? The sword will be chipped if I attack like this y'know?"
"It's fine, just hit it! You can break one or two swords!"

The two were hesitating at first, but they finally moved after the second instruction. As for the bee, Nana has stitched its wings to the ground with her magic sword.

The two swing their sword with weak postures, but it doesn't reach. Let's have Nana teach them the way to swing sword a bit later.

◇

"Level 10 enemies are really weak aren't they."
"No no, that conclusion is strange."
"That's right, even a knight in full body armor would suffer great injury if he was rammed by this monster."

That knight must have not enough guts surely.

"You two hear me. When multiple enemies come, exterminate the last enemy that we have left like just now. You two attack the enemy Nana has pinned down."
"Eh? Is it alright like that?"
"I feel guilty like I'm a stone-throwing baggage carrier."

After I told Iruna who was showing disapproval toward my instruction that it was for the sake of raising their levels, she reluctantly agreed to it.

This kind of high pride of a warrior is likable isn't it.

"By the way, can I ask something? What's stone-throwing baggage carrier?"
"Ah, do you know that every year during the harvest festival, great number of children from the villages and towns around the vicinity come to this labyrinth city to become explorers

and baggage carriers?"
"Yep, I know."
"Some of them are imprudent. There are some baggage carriers who secretly throw a stone to the monster that explorers have desperately defeated and have their level raised. That kind of act is called『stone-throwing baggage carrier』. If a baggage carrier does such thing even once, he/she won't be hired by explorers ever again."

I see, it must be like snatching prey that has been weakened. Pochi, Tama, and me raised our levels with such method at the beginning, but I shouldn't worry about it since we had received Master's permission for that.

"Eh~ parasitic people exist in any world huh. But, our goal this time is leveling you two up, so keep on keep attacking okay."
"Yeah, I understand. Much obliged."
"We'll work hard so we can quickly become useful."

Now then, the time for conversing should be over soon.
Tama has returned from the other side of the corridor while bringing some Horn Hopper.

"Pretending to be the leader just because you have a horn, how ridiculous!"

There's only monster this time. It doesn't seem like I'll have a turn, but I'm keeping alert on the surrounding to prevent Arisa and Mia getting attacked.

Tama slips through between Nana's legs. The Horn Hopper vigorously rammed its whole body onto Nana's great shield, but seemed that it was too vigorous, its prideful horn broke and fell on the ground. It's the same great shield that didn't even let a single injury in from the attack of the Hunter Mantis' big sickles. This kind of result isn't surprising in the least.

"No way, it should be able to penetrate an iron plate you know?"
"Oh dear, that's a great shield."
"You two, move your hands before your mouths."
"Yes."
"Understood."

The Horn Hopper is even softer than the Rockhead Bee from before. The two's swords are doing better than before. After confirming that the two have wounded it, I thrust my spear for the finishing blow.

◇

"Liza-san, we will be late for dinner if we don't go back soon."

That's a serious problem.

"How regrettable, we're almost at 100 monsters defeated with just three left."
"Stomach hungry~?"
"Yes nanodesu. Hamburg steak-sensei is waiting nodesu!"

It's hamburg steak tonight huh. It's a bit unsatisfactory since there's no chewiness on the texture, but Lulu should also be making steak. Leaving aside the taste, the chewiness of the monster meat we ate yesterday was quite outstanding. I wonder if the meat of these monsters are like that too?

"Iruna and Jenna, are these monsters edible?"
"Un, horn and rockhead should be edible."
"The body of the rockhead is said to be sweet and tasty, although we can't bring it back with us if we can't shave off the heavy outer rock shell. I've never eaten it before, but I've heard it from someone."

I see, it is tasty huh.
I leave my spear to Nana, and then peels off the rock shells of the Rockhead Bees by using the disassembly knife I've put on my waist's back. I line the Rockhead Bee's meat on the taking-home meat sheet, Pochi and Tama also bring and line up one body-worth of meat each. These girls must have been fascinated by the talk just now. When Pochi saw that Tama was also bringing the Horn Hopper's meat, she was also going to bring the meat in panic, but I caught her nape, stopping her. Let's have just these much today.

"Hey, do Arisa and the others always fight this many series of battles?"
"As expected, we don't usually defeat this many monsters."
"That's so, isn't it. It's usually only around 30 monsters."
"That's right huh. Your body won't be able to endure it if you always fight with this pace."

I feel that the fights with the higher-leveled enemies we usually do are difficult too, but there is no need to tell them the truth and make them feel down.

◇

We got four gold coins from the meat of Rockhead Bees which were sold for quite a price, and also from the magic cores that had higher grades that I thought. The Horn Hopper meat sold for 20 copper coins for one monster worth. There was no purchase notice for the horns of the Horn Hoppers, but it seems they can be sold for several big copper coins each if you negotiate well at the weapon shops.

I was going to sell all the meat from the Rockhead Bees, but I decided to bring one monster worth of meat as a souvenir for Master.
We had to pay the carrying tax for the Rockhead Bee's meat and the Horn Hopper's horns, but judging from Arisa who didn't complain about it, the sum was probably right.

As ordered by Master, we split the income according to the number of people, including the two girls. Arisa calculated the amount of money. I'm still bad at calculation even now.

It should be alright to split the shares for the Horn Hopper's horns after we've sold them.
At first the two refused the split income since they thought that they were just being a burden, but Arisa told them that it was Master's order, and they were forced to receive it.

"It's amazing. Earning this much by going into the labyrinth for just half a day!"

"Yeah, earning half a gold coin much for each of us is like a dream."

I tell the two who look as if they will grow wings and soar about the plan for tomorrow.

"We're going to hunt with the same pace tomorrow, so eat some good food and have a good rest today."
"T-tomorrow too, like that?"
"Uu, Iruna. I wonder if we can go back to the labyrinth city tomorrow."

I leave the two anxious girls for Arisa to console, let's quickly go home.
Lulu's meals are waiting.

Part 26 - Dinner and Personal Connections

Satou's here. I remember the homeroom teacher during my senior high school saying "When you've entered the society, take good care of your connection with other people." The person himself only says a stereotypical line, but I'm reminded of those words when I actually enter the society and put it in motion.

◇

"Nice to meet you, Chevalier Pendragon-sama. I am Ogusho, in charge of a trading business between the royal capital and the labyrinth city."
"Ogusho isn't only dealing with luxury goods, but also books and magazines from the royal capital. You can ask this person if you want to seek things related to ingredients and books."

Viscount Shimen introduces me to several of his noble friends and hired merchants during his banquet. Nobles who are related to duchy capital nobles have reasonable influence in the labyrinth city.
The hired merchant is boasting full of confidence that they can even handle urgent missions since they have multiple employees who have [Item Box], and golem carriages. If I occasionally stock up various goods from him, even if I use some rare things, the people around me would probably guess where I got it from.

From what I've seen in the duchy capital, there are two types of golem carriage, one that has golem horses pulling the carriage, and another where the carriage itself is the golem. His carriages seem to be the latter type.

"Hou, golem carriage huh?"
"Yes, my carriage is the golem itself, so we're unperturbed even if monsters or thieves attack."
"That's amazing. Is there a lot of people who ride on golem carriages in the royal capital?"

Ogushi-shi who's pleased at me showing an interest tells me about various things.

"Let's see, it's not something rare for upper nobles and the wealthy. However, the core part rarely appears in the market since it's something that's made during the era of Ancestor King Yamato."

Looks like automatic carriage that uses the magic power of the rider like I have is uncommon. Magicians seem to have their own private carriage, but they make their pupils operate the carriage since magicians don't like to have their magic power depleted.

For some reason, Ogushi-shi puts an unnatural gap there.
One of the listener, a young man who was either the cousin or the nephew of baron Sokel that was knowledgeable about this matter entered the talk.

"You know that a ruin was discovered five years ago in Kirik Earldom right?"
"As expected of Sir Sokel. You have extensive knowledge. Chevalier Pendragon, as you know,

several power engines that are called Golem Hearts were found in the ruin that Sir Sokel mentioned. Earl Kirik has presented those hearts to the royal family, and every year, one of them is bestowed to a noble who has done great meritorious deeds."

Ogushi-shi most likely deliberately didn't talk about the thing in Kirik Earldom so that Sir Sokel could easily join the conversation. I'd like to learn this kind of thing.

Nevertheless, I've heard some good things.
I was going to have Living Armors guard the above ground mansion, I had almost made a commotion.

"That's amazing. Are those kind of ruins often discovered?"
"Ruin discovery is really rare. The ruin that was discovered before that is the one in the mountains of Zettsu Earldom, but that's a story from 30 years ago."

Looks like I'd better keep the undersea ruin I've found recently a secret.

It seems the aerodynamic engine that was sold at the dark auction back then was found from the wreckage of an airship with unknown affiliation. Since he was being evasive with the 'unknown affiliation' part, it doesn't seem to really be unknown.

◇

The banquet was over without any disaster, but I was called by butler-san when I was going to ride the carriage, and then I went to parlor of Viscount Shimen. I'm sorry for Lulu, but she'll have to wait in the carriage for a little bit more. I'm slightly worried, but there doesn't seem to be anyone who'll make a stupid pass at Lulu. Ms. Miteruna told me that Lulu was famous among noble servants as the armed maid who had defeated a big man in the west guild.

"Chevalier Pendragon, I'm sorry for calling you back."

The Viscount gets to the main point after that few words of apology.

"Are you acquainted with the viceroy of this labyrinth city?"
"Yes, we've had a bit in the trade city."
"Judging from the way you speak about it, it seems that there was some problem. That man was originally the heir of a Baronage house that was the branch family of Marquis Ashinen house--"

I already had the information that the Viscount told me from Toruma Memo. However, I added several annotations on the well-known parts. It seems the viceroy succeeded as the Marquis by marrying the Marchioness who had the right.

Thus, he couldn't keep a mistress, and turned toward males and drowned in gambling.

His recent favorite seems to be waging in the underground arena of the trade city. Looks like he's making people kill each other illegally with swords. Moreover I'm surprised to hear

that he even expressively prepares the stage director to enliven the killing.

"As such, Marquis Ashinen starves for money to do as he pleases. The one who's providing him that cash is his follower, Baronet Dyukeri."

I see, that's why he likes bribe huh.

As the compensation of providing him with the fund, looks like Marquis Ashinen has let Baronet Dyukeri to have monopoly of magic medicines and magic tools sales in the labyrinth city. Excepting the explorer guild of course.

He can't restrict people bringing those things from outside since it's under the imperial command of the king, but since you need the viceroy permission to open magic shops and alchemy shops, he's able to shut business rivals out it seems. He can't restrict small scale sales from stalls and the like, but if those stalls start to have outstanding sales, his wannabe explorer subordinates will come to them with use of forces.

"Be careful of Baronet Dyukeri. He's a man who would do anything to gain money and raise his house."

Looks like he's doing as he pleases in this labyrinth city since he has the backing of Marquis Ashinen.

"I don't even want to imagine that someone talented like you impaired by that kind of man. That man should already know that you're my acquaintance. He probably won't start a fight, but that man is shrewd. Be careful not to be taken by his plot."

I guess I shouldn't try to win the favor by using my cooking skill?
Let's be careful to at least prevent Baronet Dyukeri eating my cooking.

I leave the Viscount's house after promising to meet again in the Spring Kingdom Conference.
I was slightly surprised that there was a man who was in the carriage where Lulu was waiting, but it seems he's the older brother of Ms. Miteruna. Looks like he was asking about the present condition of Ms. Miteruna from Lulu. I gave him thanks since he seemed to have given various things.

◇

"Hoe? Countermeasures for baronet?"
"Yeah, he's a person who likely will get us rolled up in some troublesome things in this city."
"U~n, I think we can just leave such underling alone though?"

I consult to Arisa who's beside me on my bed. Everyone has their own room in this mansion, but for some reason they always gather in my room at night. While talking, I confiscate the candy stick that Arisa has hidden on her back. Even though I've warned her not to snack before sleeping.

Pochi and the others are clinging in tears to Lulu on the other side of the bed. They fervently gripe about how they were returning home while expecting the promised hamburg steak, yet Lulu was not found anywhere, and there was the simplistic menu that Ms. Miteruna prepared instead. I apologized to Pochi and the others together with Lulu since I was the one who made Lulu work as the coachman.

I tell Arisa the content of the conversation I've had with Viscount Shimen.

"Fuh~n, he's the person who's controlling the medicines and magic tools."
"Yeah, he is."
"That person has the worst reputation among explorers you know."

I imagine that would be so. He's the reason why it's hard to get magic medicines that are their lifeline when there are so few magicians.

"Why don't you might as well act secretly as a mysterious merchant in disguise? You'd destroy him if you sell those absurdly good magic tools and magic medicines right?"

What a belligerent guy. What do you mean by destroy.

"Won't that make it bothersome if I'm marked."
"That's why you disguise yourself. Not as Chevalier Pendragon, but like, the mysterious merchant in black clothing, Bottakuru, or something."

That name is wrong.
You're declaring yourself as someone greedy with that name.

However, it might be a good idea to disguise myself, use Kuro name, and open a magic tool shop. And if I popularize Airships and Self-Propelled Carriage as Kuro, I won't be conspicuous even if have them.

Let's think about this idea for a bit.
I lie down on the bed and make a new memo pad in the menu. I decide to itemize the advantages and disadvantages of that idea, and examine them. I've been covered in little girls when I come to myself, but I ignore it since it's the same thing like always.

◇

Early afternoon, I've come to Marquis Ashinen's mansion to attend the tea party.

Everyone besides Lulu who's in charge of the carriage is currently power leveling with Iruna and Jenna in the labyrinth.

There's the Marchioness as one of the members of the tea party of course, and starting with the wife of the younger brother of Earl Haku whom I met yesterday, there are wifes and daughters of nobles. Most of them are married, only the two daughters of the Marchioness and the daughter of Viscount Gohat who's over 20 years old are unmarried. The Marchioness daughters are the plump and the almost-plump ones. They look like they

will need servants to push them into the carriage when they're riding one.

The other noteworthy member is the wife of Baronet Dyukeri. Unlike her husband, the atmosphere of the wife is like an unfortunate girl. If she was not fat and around forty years old, she would have likely been a [Beauty]. Apparently, they have a sickly son as the heir.

For some reason, the drill twin tail princess isn't attending. It seems she's not feeling well, although that doesn't seem like that energetic princess at all. The plump second son of the marquis couple doesn't come too, but whatever about that one.

"My, is this the so-called Castella?"
"It's even more delicious than the hotcake in the royal capital isn't it."
"Mother, I want to eat more."

The Castella is popular. Going as far as preparing the green tea was worthwhile.

And, the one that looks even prouder than me is the Marchioness. She proudly calls herself as the one who first introduces Castella.

This would have been a good tea party if it ended as it was.
It doesn't seem to be going that well.

Part 27 - Dinner and Personal Connections (2)

Satou's here. In a game, you often already have the item needed for the quest you've just taken. Since it takes time to travel in MMOs, I feel that it's better to collect the item before taking the quest.

◇

Just when the tea party was about the end, Marquis Ashinen who was in good mood appeared.

"Hey everyone, I guess the one over there is Chevalier Pendragon-dono isn't it."
"I am honored to meet your countenance, your excellency Marquis."

I intentionally politely greeted the marquis who had hardened for an instant when he saw me.

My trouble with him is trivial.

It originated from a carriage which had cut in to his carriage during the entry into the trade city. I was made to become the umpire for the duel between the old lower ranked noble who cut in and the Marquis. The result was a complete victory of the Marquis' representative, but he didn't pull back his sword even after I had announced the winner, and the old noble was going to be killed if it kept up, so I stopped it. The Marquis had intended to spill the blood of his fellow noble in the first place, and he seemed to hold a grudge against me who had hindered it.

The person who was in such a trouble with him came while bringing the expensive [Golden Nude Woman Statue] as a present. From his point of view, I probably look like a lower ranked noble who came for an apology while trying to curry his favor.

After lightly clearing his throat, he returned to the smiling face like when he entered the room, and returned my greeting.

"I'm sorry for my absence the other day even after you've expressively come. I have certainly received your kindly prepared item. It was quite an article."
"It is an honor."

It might have been better if it was a nude man statue instead of nude woman, but it would probably be turned into money anyway.

"By the way Chevalier. I have a plan to make a stadium for Rat Race outside the Labyrinth City, why don't you invest on it."
"That is quite interesting."

I've never heard of rat race, is it something like horse race? I'm interested not in the sense of investing in one, but I'm afraid that many people will ruin themselves if gambling is spread

in a place like this labyrinth city.

Before I could give that advice to the Marquis, the Marchioness scolded him.

"Keep the men's talk for later. Now is the time for enjoying teas, and amusing rumor."
"M-my love Reter, please don't be so angry. Chevalier Pendragon, let's talk about the investment for later"

He left the room without finishing his words. His works must have piled up since he's been skipping his official duty for half a month.

◇

After everyone had left the tea party, I was called by the Marchioness's attendant, and guided to a different salon than the one just now.

The Marchioness and the wife of Baronet Dyukeli are there.

"Hoshes, don't you have something to ask Sir Pendragon?"
"B-but..."

The Marchioness pushed the hesitating Hoshes-san--the wife of Baronet Dyukeli. Looks like she's a cousin of the Marchioness. Hoshes-san was really hesitating to speak, but she began to talk little by little as the Marchioness who was beside her pressed her back.

She started and stopped talking, and when she was able to talk smoothly, it was like this.

"Sir Pendragon has been traveling around various regions right? Are you familiar with『Water of Life』?
"The『Water of Life』that I know is a kind of liquor, but what kind of thing are you looking for?"

After widening her eyes from my words, she began to talk about the [Water of Life] with downcast eyes.

"I-it is not a liquor. It is a miraculous medicine which works for all disease."
"We have asked a scholar acquaintance about it, but we only get troubling story like how it's the water drop from a spirit tree that reaches the heaven, or water from melted philosopher's stone. Doesn't the knowledgeable Chevalier know anything about it?"

The Marchioness complemented on the story, maybe she was irritated by Hoshes-san. I searched the materials in the storage, but there was no applicable item. However, I have some ideas about
the [Spirit Tree that Reaches the Heaven], or the [Philosopher's Stone].
I'll ask them to introduce me to their scholar acquaintance next time.

I've found several recipes for medicines that works for all disease, but any one of them needs materials from the world tree and the philosopher's stone. As expected the place of

origin is too dangerous if I was to provide them with it.

"I am sorry, but I have never heard such miraculous medicine before. However, I also enjoy doing some compounding myself. Maybe I could offer some advices if I just know what kind of illness it is."
"Have you ever heard of Goblin Disease? It's a mysterious illness that only spreads among nobles and wealthy merchants--"

I look at the books in my storage with the search bar in the menu while listening to the talk. There are some details about the Goblin Disease in the alchemy books I've acquired in the duchy capital. Most are just like how the madam has talked about, it seems to be an incurable diseases that all kinds of curing magic potions are ineffective against. However it doesn't seem to be a fatal disease even though it's incurable. It seems you can't leave the person afflicted alone since they become bedridden.

However there's a certain document which describes that they can be cured if you give them with large quantity of fresh vegetables. It's written that it's just a fake groundless opinion, but if this disease comes from vitamin deficiency, it's possible that the afflicted person may be cured if they eat a lot of fresh vegetables.

The two are being evasive about it, but it's probably the [Sickly Son] of Hoshes-san that's afflicted with the Goblin Disease.

"I had spoken with a great doctor at the duchy capital that--"

With that preface, I talk about eating a lot of vegetables. I can make them the miraculous medicine to get them indebted to me, but I don't like using a sick child, so I tell them the next best solution.

"Would it be cured with such things?"

Hoshes-san seemed to have decided to try it while still half-convinced. I also made a promise to ask my acquaintances at the duchy capital if they could get a hold of the miraculous medicine.

The son will probably be cured just with the diet, but let's make use of this lead up in the unlikely possibility.

◇

A maid-san broke into the room when I was deciding the timing to leave my seat after the talk was over. Of course it was not because she had gone mad.

"It's terrible. Her highness princess isn't anywhere!"
"She's not visiting Geritz's room?"

Even though the Marchioness looked displeased she only asked back after lightly chiding her, maybe because she didn't want to scold a servant in front of a guest.

"T, that is, Geritz-sama is also not in his room."
"That can't be, for Geritz to be not in his room!"

I think there's something wrong with that surprise. Acknowledging her own son to be a hikikomori, that's a bit cruel. I open the map, and try to search the princess and the plump-kun, but they don't seem to be in the labyrinth city.

"Her highness princess was yearning to be an explorer. Perhaps she has entered the labyrinth?"

While replying my words with "That can't be", the Marchioness seemed to have come to the same conclusion, she instructed the servant to go to the explorer guild.

I thought of searching the two in the labyrinth with the map, but unfortunately I couldn't track them since I had not marked them.

The map is good enough to be almost almighty, but in truth it has some limitations. Once a person has appeared in the map list, their information will be updated in real time as long as they don't go outside the map. This will be automatically performed whenever I browse the map even if I'm not in that map. However, when I'm in the same map, if someone goes out and then return, they will be displayed on the list again, but when I'm not in the map when that happens, they will not be displayed on the list.
The only exception is with marking. I can pinpoint the position of people who are marked as long as they are in the map that I've known.
During the initial state of the game, you can only mark one person, and it can be added endlessly by buying premium items. It seems to be in debug mode in my case as the marking numbers is not limited--it's not and all, but checking the map will be hard if I thoughtlessly mark too many people, so I only mark important people and close friends.

That's why the present locations of the two people are unknown.

I don't know if they're in the labyrinth or outside the city, but I don't think the two have any reason to go outside, so they're most probably in the labyrinth.

The Marchioness had asked me if I could check the vicinity around the labyrinth entrance before I could even begin to talk. I undertook it willingly since that was just what I want.

Right at that time, I receive an urgent communication from Arisa who's in an excursion in the labyrinth. After some replies like we were in telephone like always, she got down to the business.

『We've saved some younger nobles who were attacked by a group of lost thieves-like people, but they can't get up due to the shock from the attack see, so can you bring some soldiers and pick us up if you're still in the Marchioness' mansion?』

Ending right when you just accepted it, this job is too fast. It seems that the princess and the second son of the Marquis are among the young nobles.

I cut the communication after telling Arisa that we would meet them.

◇

According to Arisa, there were seven young nobles including the princess and plump-kun, so I borrowed 10 viceroy soldiers from the Marchioness and went to the labyrinth. Originally, we should have asked permission from the Marquis, but they can't contact him as it seems he's gone somewhere.
When I search the map, he's in a mansion that's located in the pleasure quarter, so he must be going there to give some souvenir to his lover.

"C-chevalier-sama, o-our main duty is guarding the city, so, w-we rarely ever go into the labyrinth."
"It's alright, leave the fight to me and this maid here, so don't worry."

The captain stutters on his words since the soldiers, including him, are running after the carriage. We're not really going fast, they must be lacking exercise.

Even though there was a little problem in the labyrinth entrance, the soldiers were able to enter the labyrinth despite not having explorer certificates due to the Red Iron Plates that Lulu and I had.

I immediately update the map once we enter the labyrinth. Arisa and the others seem to be in Area 11. I contacted Arisa with Telephone magic. They're not only with the young nobles whom they've saved, but also with the 20 lost thieves they've apprehended. They're currently being attacked by 50 lost thieves who are trying to release those captives, so they're holding in a small room ahead of a passage.

I use a small hand mirror that Lulu has taken from her (Magic Pouch) and invoke the [Signal] magic as a dummy. Other people probably look at it as a communication-type magic item. After talking to Lulu in whispers, I talk to the captain-san.

"I've received a contact from our companions. They've seen a woman with princess-like clothes in Area 11. They have immediately gone to the place of discovery, we should also go there."

One of the soldier shouted, "That knight-killer area!", but the captain-san persuaded them in low voice to become silent, so we began to move. I feel that he looks pale, wonder if he's alright?

I'm advancing the corridor while swiftly dealing with the monsters we encounter using the pebbles on the ground and my fairy sword. I'm only moving at jogging speed, but the soldiers are lagging behind. As even Lulu follows along properly, they should be ashamed as soldiers.

When we've passed through the first division, I announce an information to fire them up after pretending to use the the communication magic item.

"Captain-san, I've received a communication from my companions. They seemed to have

safely protected the princess. However, they're under heavy attacks from the lost thieves."
"That's horrible! Let's hurry."

I let the soldiers who have ran out of breath to drink stamina recovery magic medicines, and then we resume our advance.

Part 28 - Princess and Lost Thieves

I'm bored noja.

Even though I've come to the labyrinth city and all, I'm not allowed to go out of the viceroy mansion even once, this isn't what is promised.

If I don't get stronger by defeating monsters in the labyrinth, I can't become the hero's companion.

But even if I go alone, I surely won't be a match to monsters.

I stare at the dagger with Nooroku family crest and heave a deep sigh. Yes, I got a sprain on the second day of my sword training, and I couldn't even make a spark after training magic continuously for two years. The only things that I can be proud of are embroidery and lacework.

When I was walking on the only place I could freely do so, the courtyard, I heard the voices of boys on the arbor beyond the thickets.

"Uwah, it's really the Bronze Plate! Jeans, you're amazing!"

"Did you make your cousin who has Red Iron Plate that you mentioned before to take you along?"

"Yeah. As the eldest son of an Earl family, I think having at least the Bronze Plate is necessary."

A light brown short haired young man who looks a bit cruel pridefully replies to the two boys who are pressing on him. The plump black haired one should be the fourth son of Baron Larupod, Peison-dono, and the the slightly clever-looking short blond hair should be the third son of Viscount Gohat, Dirun-dono.

The second son of the Marquis, Geritz-dono, and his follower, the second son of Baron Notoke, Lulam-dono don't seem like they find it interesting, they spew venom.

"Fu, fuhn. You must have thrown stones behind your cousin anyway right?"

"Right, right! There's no way you can defeat monsters when you've never even won against Merian with sword."

When the eldest daughter of Baronet Dyukeli, Merian, heard it, she quickly drew her sword and put it on the tip of Lulam-dono's nose.

"Are you saying that my sword is no match for monsters?"

"T, that's not it. I don't mean that, so please put your sword back."

You shouldn't have said careless remark if you're going to beg with cramped face like that. Or is it just how friends act with each other?

I'm a bit envious noja.

After listening to their fun conversations while feeling envious, apparently, they've decided to go to the labyrinth with just them.

"Then I'll pick you all with a carriage tomorrow, so everyone wait after wearing your weapons and armors okay. Please take care not to get found out by your family yourself. I'll prepare everything beside your armors and weapons, so everyone turn in three silver coins each."

"Eh~ that's expensive."

Lulam-dono complains to the experienced Jeans-dono's order.

"Then, can you escape from monsters when they've surrounded you without a smoke ball and a flash ball?"

"It's fine, there's no way we will turn our back from monsters with this many warriors."

"Exactly, we also have Dirun the magician. Dirun can use his wind magic to rout monsters if they surround us."

"Well, there is no monster that my wind magic cannot cut."

Jeans-dono seemed to have been taken by everyone's confident attitude, he lowered it to one silver coin each while heaving.

"I've heard it noja."

"P, princess."

Please take me with you. I couldn't hold that feeling, and jumped out in front of everyone.

"Geritz-dono, Jeans-dono, please noja. Could you take me with you?"

I ask with teary eyes while inclining my head cutely. This would have been the finishing strike if it was my father the king.

Geritz-dono and Jeans-dono couldn't bear against this just like my father the king, they granted my wish with reddened faces.

◇

"I don't feel good noja. I don't need the breakfast today. Leave me be alone until noon."

My foster sister who had been raised together with me since we were born immediately

seen through my staged illness, but it was good that she interpreted it as me wanting to oversleep.

"Princess, are you ready?"

"Merian-dono, please help me a bit."

Why is wearing this clothes so hard noja. My arms and head come out of the same place, I can't move noja. I didn't think that I would face such a challenge even before entering the labyrinth! Truly the labyrinth city! What a frightening city nanoja.

After Merian-dono helped me put on the thick horse-riding clothes that she had brought and I wore the thin mantle, I immediately feel like I've become an explorer, my heart is exhilarated. It's complete when I hang the flat white mask she's given that covers half of my face.

"How is it?"

"It really suits you. Then, let us go."

"Umu, to the labyrinth!"

◇

"I'd like to register them as explorers."

"Umm, is it for special registration?"

"No, for general one please."

Jeans-dono is the only who doesn't wear a mask since he's already an explorer. For some reason, an eyebrow of the receptionist lady is twitching. Maybe she's tired?

"Then, please your name."

"『Mysterious Noble』 Geritz."

"『Black Storm』 Peison."

"『Strong Sword』 Lulam."

"『Hero's Follower』 Mitia."

Why? Dirun-dono and Merian-dono don't continue giving their name after me and everyone else. When I looked back, they give their name while sighing. Why didn't they give their [Second Name]?

"Yes then, please take these Wood Plates. Do you need an explanation?"

"It's unnecessary."

Jeans-dono distributed the Wood plates that had been given by the representative.

Umumu. Why is my lips loosening noja. I didn't think that I would be this happy just from this tree chip. I want to dance, but I would be a disgrace of Norooku princess if I can't keep calm here.

When I raised my view, everyone was having a broad grin besides Jeans-dono. Of course Dirun-dono and Merian-dono aren't excepted either noja.

◇

"Hey, Jeans. There isn't any enemy is it."

"It really is. We've only passed other explorers once in a while. Where's the monster."

"I can't do anything about it even if you complain to me. The competitions for monster hunting are furious in the first area after all. When I came here before, I followed a retainer knight who went scouting at the border of area 11, and defeated a『Maze Moth』."

They let out their dissatisfaction for having been let down by the labyrinth after getting enthusiastic about it to Jeans-dono noja.

"Then, let's go to that area 11."

"I've heard that area 11 is a dangerous area that has an infamous monster called knight killer though?"

"That's why we stop at the border right?"

"I'll chop the knight killer with my magic if they come."

"I'll pierce it with my rapier before that happens."

Knight killer is it. Is there a monster that can defeat the like of big men with metal armor which fully wraps their bodies? It must be a gigantic monster.

Everyone is reliable noja. As expected of young nobles who have been studying martial art and magic art since they're young. Truly reliable.

◇

Even when we occasionally discover a monster, some young-looking explorers in shabby clothes are desperately engaging it, there is no monster left.

"Sheesh, those commoners are vulgar."

"It's just as Geritz-sama's said! Shall I lend my hand for them?"

"You can't do that, Lulam. Snatching monsters that other explorers are fighting inside the labyrinth is a serious breach of etiquette. If you do such a thing, your noble honor will fall as low as a lost thief."

Jeans-dono rebukes the two who were cursing the explorers.

"Hey, look at that Sign Monument. Isn't this already area 11?"

"Eh? That shouldn't be. There are a lot of monsters on the border of area 11--you're right, moreover, looks like we've even come extremely close to the interior."

"Should we head back?"

"Isn't it fine, let's keep going. There are a lot of commoner parties since a while ago anyway. It must be alright."

Jeans-dono and Dirun-dono were having careful opinions, but since most approved the strong-willed Merian-dono's opinion, we decided to continue advancing.

We found that at the place nearly one hour ahead of the place earlier.

"Look at that the color of that Sign Monument! There's something strange about it."

"Everyone! Prepare for battle. That's the sign of Gushing Hole. Monsters are coming."

The Sign Monument which shines white occasionally flickers like a candle fire in red. As if lured by everyone who has drawn their swords out, I also grip my dagger.

◇

"Haa!"

Merian-dono's rapier pierce through the Maze Moth's wing. Peison-dono's and Lulam-dono's short swords have cut the empty air. Disappointing noja.

"As expected of Merian."

"There's nothing that can avoid that rapier."

Before Jeans-dono could cut with his great sword, Dirun-dono invoked [Air Blade] and cut one wing of the Maze Moth, snatching it from Jeans-dono.

"That's dangerous! Warn everyone before you use magic!"

"I don't hit (you) right. You must adapt to the circumstance during battle."

In order to finish the Maze Moth that has been dropped to the ground, Geriz-sono swing his one-handed sword unsteadily.

"Cut it too Princess since it's alright now."

"I, I understand noja."

I also draw my dagger and participate in the Maze Moth extermination. I was surprised to see that the stomach was hard enough to prevent dagger from penetrating it even though it looked so soft.

"We did it! We've defeated monsters!"

"Hey hey, I wonder how many levels are raised?"

"Now, let's go for the next."

A voice that seems like a poured cold water reaches everyone who's excited from their first monster.

"There's no next time time for ye' guys."

Several people come out of the shadow and surround us while carrying weapons. A big bald man who's carrying a three-pronged spear on his back approaches while laughed vulgarly.

"Lost thieves huh!"

"That's right, noble young men and women. Yer' adventures is over. You can die here now and become feeder for monsters."

"I won't let it! Can you avoid my rapier?"

The bald big man casually caught the sharp stab of Merian-dono's rapier with his three-pronged spear, and broke it.

"You stupid? Ye' think yer' playing sword could reach us?"

"Uh, that can't be. Blocking against Merian's rapier."

"It's over. Save me, father..."

"Mother, I'm sorry."

This is bad noja, everyone's heart is going to break nanoja.

I encourage everyone as loud as I can. Please allow the shaking in that voice.

"Don't give up, someone must be coming to save us noja!"

"Hou? Who is coming to save you?"

The bald man rudely catches the nape of my neck, and draws his filthy face close. Uuu, it's scary noja. It's smelly noja.

My limbs become cold and shaking. The rasping sound from a while ago was coming from <<my>> clattering teeth.

"Look now, don't cry and say it? Who's coming to save you?"

"Of course it's the ally of justice you know?"

A little girl's voice cut into the audacious man's voice.

Has she come to help?!

The voice and figure of a little girl that's not suited to be in this place give courage to me. I pushed the bald man with my hands with all my might. I can't aim to become the hero's follower if I let myself become a drag to someone who's coming save me after all!

Three demi-humans who appear while leaving red trails of light easily get rid of the lost thieves like they're breaking dead trees apart. That scene was one-sided like it was some kind of play.

"I thank you for your rescue. I am the princess of Norooku, Mitia."

"Arara, the princess of the western end huh. We are『Pendragon』. We're going to take care of this, so wait a bit okay."

Noroku is of the western end she said? Does this girl come from a country in the center union?

As the 10 years old girl has promised, they have taken us out of our crisis--

"Reinforcement."

"Arisa, it's the enemy's reinforcement. I suggest to hold a defense line in the small room ahead for the safety of the protection targets."

"Okay, I'll contact master for reinforcement once we've moved there."

--or so it seems, but the lost thieves are coming one after another, we have been cornered into a small room.

The lost thieves persistently and constantly keep invading the small room. The most terrifying thing above all is the countless monsters they've brought along with the assault, it has become a [Train]. We would have been trampled by the countless monsters if there wasn't Nana-dono's impregnable nature magic. I didn't think that monsters would be so dreadful. It's so furious, it even makes Jeans-dono and the firm Merian-dono can't stand up in the corner of the room.

The time until the reinforcement arrives feels really long even though it should have been short.

And then, I met that boy.

Part 29 - Lost Thief Extermination

Satou's here. There were Samurai and Thieves appearing as enemies in the labyrinth PC game that I played a long time ago. I didn't mind about it at that time, but I wonder if they were living in the labyrinth?

◇

"I'll be arriving there in 15 minutes."
『Ho~i, we're waiting.』

I check the condition on Arisa's side with [Telephone].

Looks like the lost thieves are besieging Arisa and the others, and it has become a stalemate. They run away when Liza and the others come out, and during that chance, they break into the small room by using the crevice-like small passages and going along the dark labyrinth wall.
Moreover, an upper level 30 bearded man who seems to be the lost thieves boss and a unit of paralyzing blowgun users are troublesome, so they can't quite go on attack. It should have been easy with the abilities of Arisa and the others, but they're probably trying to make it non-lethal.
And then, the lost thieves boss who seems to have grown impatient with the stalemate uses his henchmen to lure monster 'train' to attack the small room where Arisa and the others are.

Checking on the map, their stamina and magic power have only decreased for a bit, no one seems to be hurt.

◇

Lulu and me are running in the corridor while taking the viceroy's guards along.

"M, master, in the front, another..."
"Lulu, don't look at it."

There is a scattered remain of a lost thief, half-eaten by monsters, lying on the middle of the corridor. I wonder how many are there with this? Obviously, luring the monster train means risking your life for it. Looking at the Collar of Subordination on his neck, this man is probably a slave.

I cut down the bee-like monsters that are swarming on the corpse with my fairy sword. They're soft like a paper despite their hard looking appearance.

While we're advancing on the corridor, Lulu and I defeat the small fry monsters from the train. The soldiers behind us have been quiet since a while ago, looks like this pace is hard for them.

Some lost thieves are reflected on the edge of my radar.

I shoot [Remote Stun] the moment we turn on the corner. The targets are the ones encircling Arisa and the others. Unlike [Magic Hand], the Remote Stunn orbs can be seen, so I aimed with the angle where the soldiers behind couldn't see it.
At the same time, I throw a bundle of wire from my storage and use [Magic Hand] to bind the thieves. It was harder than I thought.

We arrive at the place where the lost thieves are lying on the ground, tied.

"Chevalier-sama, these people are?"
"They're probably the lost thieves that my vassals have arrested. Sorry but it seems they've just been binded, but not tied on something. We're bringing them to the surface later, so can you tie them to those pillars over there?"
"Yes! Oy, gather those thieves in one place!"

I get the soldier to tie the lost thieves on the nearby pillar-like structures. While leaving a-bit-under-20 lost thieves to the soldiers, Lulu and I continue on the corridor. The captain and half of the soldiers are going to follow later. There doesn't seem to be any monster from here to where Arisa and the others are.

I hear weapon clashing sounds from ahead.
We run past the curved passage. I can see two red light intersecting in the darkness ahead of the passage.

One of them is Liza. I feel that the red light doesn't only come out from her spear, but also extends to her armor, wonder if it's just my imagination. Maybe it's due to that that her remaining magic power is severe.

The other one is a bearded man who seems to be the lost thief boss. Even though he should be human, he looks like a dwarf. The thing on his arm must be a magic axe. He's the second person I've seen using a battle axe after Elder Dohar.

"Master~?" "Nanodesu!"

Since Pochi and Tama are waving their hands greatly at me from behind Nana who's protecting the small room entrance from the monsters, I wave back at them.

The boss whom Liza was fighting deliberately took some distance away from her, and threw a flash ball he had taken from his bosom to the ground.

It's a manga-like situation.

Just before the flash ball hits the ground, I move before Lulu and protect her eyes from the intense light. It was slightly dazzling, but thanks to Light-intensity Adjustment skill, I wasn't blinded.

"Releasing your sword from your dominant hand, what an amateur!"

The boss who's put his back behind the flash is quickly approaching with Physically Reinforced speed that equals Nana, trying to take me hostage. Maybe I should have some fun by letting him take me hostage and have Liza saves me.

His big arm that's covered in bristle was reaching toward my neck before he caught me. At the same time, he pushed out his magic axe's handle toward my solar plexus.

He intends to seize me after making me faint huh.

Stinks.

A strong stench pierces into my nasal cavity.

Nope, nope.

I don't want this stinking hand catches me.

>[Stench Resistance Skill Acquired]

Before that thought even appears in my mind, I crush his arm and kick the magic axe with my knee. While my knee is still folded, I lightly kick his belly with my toes. A small sound of escaped air that's not even a scream reaches my ears. I block the smelly saliva with <<Flexible Shield>>, and I use [Deodorant] on his body to erase the stench before he flies away.

After rotating once in the air, he landed just before Lulu behind me. Lulu holds down the boss on the floor like she's flowing with the self-defense skill she's learned in the elf hometown even while being surprised by the boss that has suddenly appeared in front of her.

I capture the remaining lost thieves in the nearby passages with [Remote Stun] and wires before the flash disappears. The soldiers shouldn't notice since it hasn't entered into their views yet. While I'm at it, I use [Mana Drain] on the boss to prevent him from struggling.

Once the flash disappears, there's the figure of Lulu who has easily apprehended the boss before everyone's eyes.

Liza who's quickly rushed here binds the boss with the wire I've given her. I was a bit worried with the boss' broken arm that was dangling, but I decided to leave it alone when I thought about the corpses he had sacrificed for the monster train.

After Liza has tied him up, let's snatch the ring that seems to be for invoking magic from the boss' finger, and the hidden weapons. I point out the things she needs to collect. Lastly, I take out a [Magic-sealing Chain] from the bag, pass it to Liza, and let her tie the boss more with it. I happened to notice this item when the arson noble was arrested, and then bought it in the duchy capital when I was getting the scrolls. It's commonly sold in magic tool shops in the duchy capital. It's 10 gold coins for one chain, quite a price.

"Master, I am very sorry for I cannot stop the thieves."

After apologizing me for not being able to stop the boss, Liza praises Lulu. I catch Pochi and Tama who've come running, and go toward Arisa and the others while joining hands. I leave the thieves lying on the floor of the corridor along the way to the soldiers besides the captain-san.

Since the magic axe is deeply stuck in the ceiling and doesn't seem like it'll come down, I use [Magic Hand] and retrieve it into the Storage.

>Title [Natural Enemy of Lost Thief] Acquired
>Title [Guardian of Order] Acquired

◇

There are countless bodies of monsters in front of the small room where Arisa and the others are holding on.

"Sorry for being late."
"Master, I was scared~"
"Mwu?"

Arisa who's speaking in odd manner while clinging to me is off-putting. See, even Mia has a 'goodness gracious' face on. After she hugged me, she whispered the situation to me. It sure helps, but I think the strange acting is unnecessary.

The room is 20 tatami-mat wide with uneven stone pavements. On the left side of the room--where it can't be seen from the passage, the princess and the plump-kun, and also five young nobles are sitting. One of the young nobles is a girl. There are 25 lost thieves tied up on the right side of the room. It has increased by five who are probably survivors from the monster train. The ones that have reasonable amount of HP despite having their clothes reddened with blood must have been healed by Mia's healing magic, I think.

Strangely, even though the young nobles should not have been injured, all of them look like they're going to die. They were probably really scared after getting surrounded by the lost thieves, and then attacked by the monster swarm. The two people from [Beautiful Wings] look better, but it feels like they're standing with willpower.

"Geritz-dono, I've come by the request of the Marchioness. The guards have also come too, let's safely get back to the surface with all your friends."
"T, thank you."

I told that to the exhausted looking Plump-kun with a smile. I thought he was going to say something like, "You should've come sooner", but he only said a normal thank after nodding a bit. I take out a wet towel in the storage from the bag, and pass it to plump-kun. I've put a lot of these towels in the storage since Pochi and Tama often dirty their faces during meals.

He looked blank for a second, but after I told him that it was to clean his face with so he

could feel refreshed, he began to wipe his face awkwardly.

The princess who's sitting beside him also has some dirt sticking on her face that seems to be from blood spurt. I take another wet towel like the one for plump-kun but since her eyes look dead, I gently wipe her face with it.

"You have also done well your highness. Your cute face is dirty."
"...U, umu, thank you, for the rescue nanoja."

Looks like she's been refreshed after I wiped her face, willpower surges back from the hazy expression of the princess. I had wiped her face without caring since it was a loli face, her lipstick and makeover had come off.

Let's gloss over the failure with a smile. Although feeble, the princess faintly smiles back, so let's consider it a good thing.

The other young nobles have also recovered enough to complain, "I'm tired" or "I'm hungry" from the effect of wet towels even though their conditions are like empty shells. It might be rude of me to say this, but unexpectedly, every one of these youths properly said their thanks.

Captain-san seemed to consider that taking 70 people of the lost thieves back to the surface was going to be difficult, he suggested to cut their necks here and now, but I rejected it.

I connect every 10 lost thieves with wires, and let each of our vanguards guard each group. That's 40 people. Lulu and I are in charge of guarding 10 people who are especially high leveled, while the soldiers are to be in charge of a little over 20 young lost thieves. The princess and the young nobles are to be guarded by the two from Beautiful Wings.

Now then, the lost thieves probably will try to escape along the way, so let's threaten them. I've put gags on the mouths of the ten high-leveled ones beforehand so they won't say unnecessary things.

"Hear me! You lost thieves! I will bring you to the surface now. Someone who try to escape--"

The remain of a Horn Hopper that has been skinned beforehand with Mia's magic is burned with acid magic. The lost thieves are looking with a pale face toward the crumbling remain of the monster while a smoke with unpleasant smell is rising from it.

"--is going to be burned alive with acid magic like such, or become a transfigured figure from this decomposing wyvern poison that's worse than death."

>[Threaten Skill Acquired]

I took out a bottle that's been intentionally shaped sinisterly and showed it to the lost thieves. This bottle is the work of a young artist in the duchy capital that I've acquired, I

make use of its appearance. It seems my deception skill's kicked in, the lost thieves seems to have believed my words.

30 soldiers from the Labyrinth Army had come as a reinforcement before the lost thieves could try to escape, so we were able to get back to the surface without any problem. Fortunately, no monster tried to attack us, probably because it was a large group with more than 100 people.

Now then, after I hand over the young nobles to their guardians, it would be mission complete.

Part 30 - Lost Thief Extermination (2)

Satou's here. There's a wonderful item that raises your experience gain by 200% in MMOs and browser games. Implementing the mechanic in the game was unexpectedly easy since it just needed an added coefficient during the time you gain experience points. I'm interested just what is the level up medicine that I saw in the black market composed of.

◇

One of the soldier immediately went ahead alone as a messenger after we met the the labyrinth army troops, so three high level guild staffs were already waiting in front of the labyrinth gate. Although I said high levels, they're only around 30-35.

"T, this guy is the『Mad Magic Axe』Rudaman?!"
"That Rudaman the Lost Thief King?"

For some reason, the high level staffs look awfully surprised when they checked the bearded daruma boss with a Yamato Stone. Lost Thief King uh, wonder if it's like the lesser version of Pirate King?

"Chevalier-sama, you've done an outstanding work. This Rudaman is a fiendish lost thief who have turned the table against many subjugation units."
"His reward prize should be more than 100 gold coins now."

About as much as one magic sword huh. The magic axe that I've taken just before seems quite expensive too.

"Well then, Chevalier-sama. We will have to take the lost thieves to the west guild, please come to the guild later."
"Yes, I understand. Best regards."

The bearded daruma boss is taken away by the three high level staffs. The small fry lost thieves are being made to check their statuses with the Yamato stone in a group of five by the labyrinth army.

The reason why I didn't go with them was because half of the young nobles got exhausted from climbing the meandering great stairway, thus I needed to wait them to come out while they were being carried by the soldiers.

Jeans and Merian were the only two that had come back to themselves, the princess was shouldered by Lulu. Every member besides me and Lulu said "There's still some quota for today." and then they returned to Area 11. The two people from Beautiful Wings were screaming, but they were dragged by Pochi and Tama who took their hands.

"Satou-dono! My level has been raised noja!　Labyrinth is really amazing."
"Congratulations, Mitia-sama. How about Jeans-dono and Merian-dono?"

Princess Mitia had returned from confirming her status with the Yamato stone. If she could go back on her feet in this short amount of time, she might be apt to become an explorer. I also asked the two people who have arrived with her, but Jeans shook his head and denied it.

"No, we've only defeated one Maze Moth."

Merian who was brooding over something asked me like she had readied herself.

"Chevalier-sama. How should I do to become as strong as your retainers?"
"Training and actual combat. Those girls asked some famous martial artists and fairykin masters in the duchy capital and trained without sparing any time to sleep, and they also had extreme actual combat where they almost died in the labyrinth of this city and another one."

Un, I probably didn't lie. The power leveling thing is a secret.

"I see, so it really is about actual combat..."
"I'm warning you just in case, if the present you try to do actual combats in order to become stronger, you would die in not even a month."
"Wha, what do you know about me!"

I was worried at Merian who was muttering like she was obsessed, and warned her. Looks like she was shocked by my remark, she reflexively showed her dissatisfaction emotionally.

I know her actual nature only superficially, but looking at her level and skill, she would die without a doubt if she was surrounded by multiple monsters. Her level is 3, she only has Etiquette skill.
By the way, even though Jeans beside her has Bronze Plate, his level is 4, and he only has Social and Horse-riding skills. It's a mystery how he got the Bronze Plate.

"It's probably good if you hide your social position and train for a bit in a dojo. I think it'd be good if you re-challenge the labyrinth once you've gained your confidence back after working hard for a month."
"Do you also want to say that my sword is a play?"
"Merian, leave it at that. Your anger is misplaced at Sir Pendragon."

Merian was going to say more, but she apologized with reluctant face after Jeans admonished her. She seemed to be interested with the training, she asked me which dojo should she go. I saw some open dojo-like places in several vacant lands, but since I didn't know which one was good, I asked the staff-san.

"A reputable dojo?"
"Yes, if possible it'd be good if the instructor is a former explorer, or someone from the army."
"Then I recommend Horun-dono's dojo『Labyrinth Self-defense Style』."
"Labyrinth self-defense style huh. Isn't there a dojo with more actual combat training?"

It seemed Merian was dissatisfied with the female staff's recommendation, she asked about another dojo while tampering with the rapier on her waist. The female staff seems to have expected that reaction, she corrects Merian's misunderstanding while smiling.

"Ufufu, Labyrinth Self-defense style is for actual combat you know. By self-defense it means emphasizing on your own safety as the priority, evading the opponent's attack to prevent it from injuring you. Since in the labyrinth, having injury directly relates to the danger to your life."
"That makes sense. Even just getting your foot injured means that you can't evade, and you'd be killed in the blink of an eye."

It seems Merian has decided to try going to that dojo, although it's unknown whether it's because she has understood the female staff's explanation, or my follow-up.

◇

I lead the young nobles who have finally come out to leave the labyrinth. Four of them who were being carried by the soldiers kept being carried until the west gate.

Six fine carriages are waiting outside the west gate.

"You fool!"

Baronet Dyukeli who was the foremost to step up slapped his daughter's cheek with his palm. It seemed to be a relatively merciless slap, Merian dropped her knees to the ground while blood came out of the edge of her mouth.

"Chevalier Pendragon. I thank you for your help. I will pay this debt, without fail."

After telling me so, Baronet Dyukeli took Merian like he was dragging her to the carriage and went home.

The ones who came for the other young nobles were only the butlers and the servants, so they boarded the carriage and went home without any argument. The differences in accordance to their houses are great, but they have one thing in common; the ones who have come for them are not their parents, but the servants. They only came to pick the young nobles as instructed by their masters, but they told me that the family heads would like to say their thanks another day.

The butler of the Marchioness relayed the Marchioness words, asking me to come to the mansion later. I said to the butler, "I need to report this matter to the explorer guild, so I will be intruding in the evening."

◇

I've visited the west guild to explain the situation, but for some reason I have been summoned to the guildmaster's room.

"Thanks fer' coming Satou-dono. We had difficulty dealing with that Rudaman guy. I can't raise your rank Mithril as expected, but I'll let ya have preferential treatment if we get some delicious info."
"Ha, thank you very much."
"What's with that spiritless reply."

The guild master who was in good mood was going to hug me, I smoothly evaded her.
That bearded daruma would immediately made his subordinates became decoys if the fight turned into his disadvantage, on top of that, he had many hideouts, so the guild subjugation unit couldn't pin down them.

"Your reward should be quite considerable from the prize money and the selling-off of the lost thieves who become slaves. Don't forget to to get it from the cashier later."

The guildmaster added another words with a vulgar smile, "Those are some uhauha sum of money." This person is well suited for this kind of smile.

"Will all the lost thieves get turned into slaves?"
"Yeah, they will be working in the coal as crime slaves. Guys like Rudaman who has people with grudge against them will be executed publicly after they're turned into slaves. This time, the other one among the subjugated thieves beside Rudaman who will get the treatment is his aid, the vice-boss."

Originally, the work in the coal is already hazardous enough even without the public execution stuff, it seesms they will only live for three years there. I'd like to protect some children who are around junior high school students among them, but since they all have [Murderer] in their Reward and Punishment, I ended up not saying anything unnecessary when I thought about their victims and the bereaved family.

Ushana-san the secretary entered right at that time. It seems that Rudaman wants to negotiate with the guildmaster. For some reason, the conversation flowed in the direction of me coming with the guildmaster to the dungeon where Rudaman was confined.

◇

"So, what do you have to say?"
"I'm looking fer' mercy appeal."
"Stop saying stupid things. You will be executed publicly."

Rudaman is confined in a particularly strict section of the dungeon. He's tied with Magic-sealing chain inside a room with sturdy iron bars. He negotiated with an arrogant face without looking like he was in pain from the broken arm.

"That might be the proper thing to do, but I can't stand becoming an exhibition for the shitty nobles and the clean citizens. Won't ya put me into Violet?"
"Look back at your own crimes. Your unsightly head will be shown on the severed head stand of the west gate."

It seems there's quite a barbaric custom. Is this Edo era. I don't want to approach the west gate for the time being. By the way, Violet is a unit of the kingdom army that's composed of crime slaves, it seems it's a unit with high disposable rate that's specially used to fight giant monsters or as the decoy. Ushana-san told me.

"Would the kind noble over there grant me wish? You subjugated us lost thieves without killing anyone and purposely brought us alive. You don't like letting someone die right?"
"I don't like killing people, but I don't have any intention of denying a villain from getting executed."
"I'll tell ya an information that'll interest ya."

Information that will interest me huh. Might as well hear it.

"It depends on the content. I'll let you negotiate if it's really an interesting info."
"There are a lot of female children baggage carriers whom explorers handed over as sacrifices in our hideout. And those people are making Fiend Drugs as ordered by us."
"Fiend Drug you said!?"

The guildmaster who was acting as a spectator in silent interrupted.

Since some threatening name came out, I search it in the documents I have. Fiend Drug seems to be a medicine that was originally developed to bestow humans with physical strength enough to fight monsters in a hand-to-hand combat. If you drink this medicine, you will be strengthened enough to close 10 level gap, on top of that, it has an effect of halving the experience needed to level up. It was spread in the kingdom in the blink of an eye.

However, this medicine has an atrocious trap laid. If you regularly drink this medicine and keep leveling up, you'll become a grotesque monster. It seems that you will become a monster with 50% probability with 10 level up, and 90% probability with 20 level up. The level up is nice, but there's no meaning to it if you end up become a monster. However, looks like there are a lot of people who yield to the temptation in this harsh world.

I'm bothered with the sacrifice thing, but let's postpone it.

"If you leave them alone, the women and children who are cultivating field in our hideout will be killed. The killer is a noble, the same as you."
"In other words, the one who needs the Fiend Drug is that noble right?"
"Yeah, we use it sometimes too though."

Rudaman wants to be put into the Crime Slaves Unit (Violet) in exchange for the information of the secret cultivation place. Still, didn't he carelessly talk too much? I can't help but feel that the Negotiation and Cross-examination skills had been accidentally used.

"So, what's the noble name?"
"The fool who should be able to tell me that has stupidly died see. I know the name of the underling who acts as the agent to sometimes bring us food and salt though. That stingy bastard was called Besso or something. Ya tail that guy, and the other side should get in contact with him."

"Either way, there's no meaning unless we catch them in act huh. Guildmaster, what would you do?"

The guildmaster had a pensive look on her face for a while, but it seemed that she judged that it'd be dangerous if the Fiend Drug spread in the labyrinth city, she accepted Rudaman's deal. I couldn't help even if I remained here any longer, so I bid my farewell to the guildmaster.

The prize money and the slave sales amount to 160 gold coins. I put it in the bag without counting it. For now, I marked Besso before I forgot.

Fumu, forbidden magic drug huh.

Part 31 - Fiend Drug

Satou's here. When I hear the word 'disguise', I remember about the famous thief protagonist who's good at it. I think that a lot of Japanese people remember about the gesture of which he tears off his fake face from the chin. The faces were thrown away thoughtlessly, but in actuality, making them needs some quite laborious works.

◇

Well then, let's find the culprit.

I open the map and search. The search term is [Fiend Drug].

The search discovers three points. Both of the first two points seem to be owned by explorers each. The last one is probably the catch. Nearly 100 fiend drugs are stocked there.

It's the mansion of the noble that I've just met during the viscount dinner the other day, Sir Sokel. I thought that it would have been Baronet Dyukeli's mansion, this is unexpected.

I check on the detail of Sir Sokel's mansion.

I've confirmed that he has the drugs stocked in a hidden room in his mansion. There are slaves with Compounding and Alchemy skills inside that hidden room, so there's no mistake about it.

I mark Sir Sokel, his servants and those slaves. There are 20 people in total. Among them, one is in the downtown with people who have various Reward and Punishment. Those people seem to belong to a criminal guild called [Goblin Claw]. They were a large group of around 60 people, marking them would make my map too busy, so I ended up only marking the boss and the three high leveled ones.

They're probably going to destroy evidences and kill the witnesses. That means the ones in danger are probably Rudaman in the dungeon, the lost thief executives, and the proxy, Besso.

Leaving aside Besso and his cohorts, I'd like to get the carriers and slaves who are working in the labyrinth hideout into safety. However, this one should be fine even if I don't do something immediately. I had searched the lost thieves hideouts when I first entered the labyrinth, they're quiet deep in the interior. If they could prepare a force that could assault such a place, they would have directly attacked the guild to kill the witnesses.

The alchemist in Sir Sokel's mansion is also in danger, but they wouldn't easily kill him. He's an important person who can create the fiend drug, and they shouldn't be able to replace the alchemist so easily.

Now then, I've already finished searching the culprit, let's leave it to the guildmaster to take care of them.

I used invisibility and hiding (skills) like when I was invading the duke castle, and intruded the guildmaster's room, then I left a mysterious document that read "The mastermind is Sir Sokel?" Just in case, I also added a postscript that described the hidden room in Sir Sokel's mansion and the lair of Besso and his cohorts.

After I finished my business, I took Lulu out of the explorer guild.

◇

"Master, where are we going?"
"We're going to the mansion."

It's still 2-3 hours before evening. There's something I want to do before visiting the Marchioness.

"Welcome bacc, bac."
"Welcome back, Lulu-sama."
"I'm back, Hoho and Kitona."

Looks like the children who were doing some work in the front yard could see the carriage coming to the mansion, they ran to greet us. After getting me down in the front yard, Lulu passed the rein to Kitona who had climbed to the coachman's stand, and went to the stable while teaching her how to operate the carriage.

"Welcome back, master."
"Yeah, I'm back. How are the children doing?"
"Yes, the five bedridden children have no problem doing anything besides manual labors. Roji and Ani still have some problem with their speech, but they have a good memory and they're full of motivation above all, they will probably become a full-fledged cleaning lady sooner than I thought."

I was only planning to hire them temporarily, but it might be good to let them continue working under Ms. Miteruna officially. I'll talk about it with Ms. Miteruna if there's no problem in half a moon.

After receiving some more reports, I go to the basement. I instructed Ms. Miteruna to not let anyone get close since I want to concentrate.

I've put books that I've bought in Seryuu city and Duchy capital in the basement study room. Their contents are beginner magic books that are overlapping with each other.

I shut the bolt-shaped lock on the door, and teleport to the Mansion of Ivy.
I informed Lulu that I had teleported to the Mansion of Ivy with Telephone.

◇

"Huh? Are you not with Misanalia-sama? Br-, Satou-dono."
"Yeah, Mia is working hard in the labyrinth. I've come to use the workshop."

I head to the workshop accompanied by Leriril who looks bored.

"Artificial skin huh, another weird thing."
"Yeah, I need it for a bit."

I've come to the workshop in order to make the disguise set. People will doubt the identity of an unknown masked person no matter what. Therefore, I thought of making a fake face under the mask this time. A great person once said that if something is hidden, people will want to uncover it.

The thing about artificial skin is recorded in the Trazayuya document. It's an old record that's written even before the homonculus manufacture, it seems to be developed for living dolls use that work as a nanny.

First, mix the culture fluid.
It was just a world tree sap diluted with 100 times the water, so it was immediately finished.

Next, drop the original somatic cell for the artificial skin to the culture fluid. Since Leriril looked really bored, I took one drop of blood from the tip of her finger.

I operate the culture tank that's connected to the super advanced alchemy instrument. It's actually easy since the detailed procedures are written in the document. Since it needs 30 minutes to complete even with the rapid culture, let's do another work in parallel.

First, the wig. I make it white hair and long enough to cover my eyes. I make only the bangs in black since its purpose is to make an impression.

There's still some time, so let's make the clothes and the shoes next.

I take out a cloth made of Yuriha fiber dyed in black from the storage, and arrange it into clothes. I put some shoulder pads in the jacket to prevent sloping shoulders. For the white gloves, I've gone a bit overboard by sewing pentagrams from the Green Silk thread that has been dipped in Blue Liquid on it. Finally, I prepare the sleeveless inverness coat, and it's complete.

It's the pre-war schoolboy uniform style that would make Arisa drool if she saw it. I had also prepared the hat, but it'd be too overdone if I also put on Geta, so I made sneakers made from whale leather.

The needed area size of the artificial skin had finally been completed when I finished sewing the clothes. I'm in a hurry this time, so making only one should suffice. Before long, I'll make another 4-5 pieces.

This time I'm making a disguise mask by applying process that's similar to special effect make-up with the artificial skin as the base. Another person's face is a difficult thing. Let's make the mask with the face of a famous celebrity on earth as the base. I adopted the face of a young foreign star that won't be associated to me.

The artificial skin alone won't be able to conceal my facial skeleton, so I use a fiber that can expand and one that can harden if I put it with magic power as the mask frame. The material for both fibers are abundant in the storage from the gathered materials there, it should be enough.

During the work, Leriril diligently helped me by preparing the work instruments like an assistant would, or cleaning the fallen materials and scraps.

This disguise mask that I've made has become a magic tool that can change the contour and fat of your face.

Suddenly, it flashes in my mind, "Can't I also manipulate my body figure if I use these materials?"

That might be a good idea.

I can't make it right now since I don't have enough artificial skin though. Let's postpone making the skin-colored leotard for later even though it's been on my mind. Making my body double might be possible if I add it to a living doll.

◇

Now then, let's arrest Sir Sokel all at once with the completed clothes and disguise mask.

I open the map to check the turn of events.
Apparently, the situation has rapidly progressed during my carefree handicraft endeavor.

The lost thieves besides the executive classes in the (explorer guild) dungeon have been moved to the dungeon of the labyrinth army, maybe as a precaution against a raid.

Besso and his friend are in the back alley of the downtown. The two seem to be hurt. When I checked on them with [Clairvoyance] magic, they were being chased by thug-like group of people. They're probably members of [Goblin Claw]. Some male guild staffs are also chasing after Besso and his friend.

And the vital one, the mansion of Sir Sokel has been surrounded by the viceroy's soldier.

Since there are some guild staffs in the mansion, the guildmaster who has looked at that document seems to have urged the viceroy to take out his soldiers. Still, I didn't think that she would raid the mansion of a noble without even a proof. I don't know if it's because the secret maneuver skill is superior, or the guildmaster is quick to act, or the Fiend Drug is too dangerous.

They have gathered all the mansion's servants and the slaves in the entrance hall. Sir Sokel is not among them.

From the marker list in the map search, I tap on Sir Sokel to see his current position. He is in a carriage with his butler outside of the labyrinth city. The alchemist-san in question is also

with Sir Sokel.

Judging from the direction they're going, northwest, they're probably escaping to the coal mine town, or maybe they will continue going north to Eluett Dukedom. Since they're outside the map, I use [Clairvoyance] magic to see and check whether there are pursuers. The viceroy soldiers are pursuing them by riding a horse five kilometers behind them, they will probably caught up before they reach the mountain road.

Well then, it seems there's no need to use the disguise set even though I've taken the trouble of creating them.

A [Signal] from Lulu came when I was feeling exhausted.
The content is [Emergency Incident].

Part 32 - Fiend Drug (2)

Satou's here. When I hear the word 'jealousy', love is the first thing that comes to mind. However, unexpectedly, jealousy against the success of other seems to run quite deep.

◇

"I'm going back to the mansion since some urgent business came up. Leriril, I'm sorry but please clean-up the workshop."
"Yes, I understand Satou-sama!"

Huh~? I wonder why, Leriril seems strange. Far away from calling me brat, she even uses "sama" instead. I waved my hands to Leriril who saw me off with sparkling eyes and returned with teleport. Come to think of it, I feel that she had become quiet after I completed making the artificial skin.

Now then, putting aside the trivial, I have to go for Lulu's emergency.

I'd like to go back immediately with teleport, but let's check the situation ahead.
First, let's confirm the mansion with the map. About 10 soldiers and two high level knights have come to the mansion. They're all the viceroy's subordinates.

This is puzzling. What do they want?

After checking the mansion basement with [Clairvoyant] I return there with Teleport.

I ignore the knocking on the basement door, take out a pen, an ink, and several paper sheets from the storage and put them on the work desk. In addition, I take out a candle and a candlestick, light it, and put it on the work desk. Lastly, I put the seal ring there and the preparation is complete.

Please let them be pointless if possible.

I unlock the bolt, open the door, and shout at the one who's knocking the door.

"You're noisy. I can't concentrate!"
"I, I'm sorry. Chevalier-sama is being suspected of using fiend drug. Please come to the viceroy office."
"Me using fiend drug?"

We come up above the ground while talking.

Apparently, they're doubting us for using the fiend drug since our levels are abnormally high for being so young.

Ludicrous. The risk is too great compared to the effect. If we only want to level up, I can make them level up to level 50 in just 10 days even without using such a drug.

"Master."
"It's fine, this is just right. I have some business with the Marchioness anyway, so let's think of this as the opportunity."

Still, who instigate this I wonder?

The Marquis should be thinking that I'm a source of revenue, while Baronet Dyukeli has a debt regarding the matter about his daughter. The possible pattern is from the Marquis' followers who don't want their position get taken.

When I was asking Ms. Miteruna to watch over the mansion, she gave me some advice.

"Master, I've heard some rumor about inquisitor Baron Vilas that he abuses his Fathom skill to get ahold of merchant's and servant's weakness. Please be careful."

I see, so he would change the subject once he starts asking things unrelated to fiend drug, I should object when that happens. I won't be caught off-guard if I just ready myself. Let's have the Negotiation and Tact skills work their magic.

While thanking Ms. Miteruna for her advice, I see the basement with Clairvoyant magic. Then by using [Magic Hand], I open the ink bottle on the work desk, and write a memo using the quill pen with instructions for Ms. Miteruna. I prepare another letter asking for rescue, and stamp the sealing wax with my seal. I collect the seal and the candle into the storage.
I didn't give it directly right now in order to prevent the mastermind from anticipating it. The handwritings are a bit messy, but it should be readable enough.

"Right, Miteruna. I forgot to close the ink bottle in the basement. Could you close it before the ink dried out?"
"Certainly master."

I head toward the carriage that has been prepared by the viceroy office, I explained the situation to Arisa and the others in the labyrinth, and ordered them to stay there for the time being.

◇

I bring Lulu along to the viceroy office, the three-story big building made of marbles that's right beside the eastern gate.

"Sir Pendragon, the inquisitor will be coming in a short while, please wait a bit in this room."

The high class-like bureaucrat young man has lead us to a bizarrely splendid room for state guests. I recorded various interiors like the furnitures with [Photo] magic since I rarely came to such a place.

"Lulu, relax your shoulders and sit down here. It's quite comfortable you know."

I let Lulu who was standing behind me come to sit on the sofa beside me I asked the maid

who was standing by in the corner of the room for two sets of tea.

I whisper to Lulu gently that there's nothing to be worried about in low voice while embracing her head. The maid-san shouldn't suspect anything since Lulu's face has turned red. I think maid-san hadn't had enough training since she looked like she'd even vomit out sugar.

The inquisitor guy finally arrived when Lulu had settled down. Moreover, he's even brought six armed knights along, possibly to intimidate us. They're skilled people of level 20-30.

"Nice to meet you, Sir Pendragon. I am Baron Vilas the inquisitor. Ah, you can keep sitting like that. The inquiry will be over soon."

The inquisitor is a bald man with thin eyebrows who has a magic being like Raka with a [Fathom] skill. It should be a skill that can tell if someone is telling the truth or lying if I'm not mistaken. Come to think of it, this is the first time I've meet this baron. I would have meet all the peerage-holding nobles in the labyrinth city if I just met with the vice-viceroy next.

"Then answers my questions with『Yes』or『No』. There is no need to add excessive explanations."

The inquisitor warned with a posed look on his face that would likely have a light sfx on if he wore glasses.

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Have you used fiend drug yourself?"
"I have not."

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Have you administered fiend drug to other people?"
"I have not."

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Have you instructed other people to administer fiend drug?"
"I have not."

Long.

He's probably asking the question one by one to prevent deception.

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Do you know the recipe for making fiend drug?"

A dangerous question finally came up, but I didn't need to answer that.

◇

"Sir Vilas! What do you think you're doing? Sir Pendragon has rescued my son and the state guest princess from the lost thieves. So to speak, he's the benefactor of Selbira city. He wouldn't take those lost thieves who should be his underlings to the surface alive if he had anything to do with fiend drug!"

The one who entered the room with a long protest is the Marchioness. Even the Marquis

himself is behind her. A fox in tiger's clothing, version 2*. This time the connection, or rather the bribe power from the prior investment has bear its fruit.

"My wife is right. Who instructed you to haul Sir Pendragon away?"

So the one who ordered him to capture me really wasn't the viceroy.

"I-it's because the story about the disparity between the strength of Sir Pendragon and his retainers and their ages was the talk of the salon..."
"In other words, you had bought into the baseless baloney in the salon, and made him, who is one of your fellow noble, underwent the humiliating inquisition?"
"Viceroy-sama, i-it's a misunderstanding--"

Apparently, I have been regarded as an eyesore for participating in the Marchioness' tea party. There really are some narrow-minded people who get upset just from a newcomer participating in the tea party once.

I took advantage of when the Marquis was reproaching Baron Vilas, and inquired him, he confessed while sweating waterfall that his goal was to seize my weakness by first inquiring about the fiend drug. Looks like it's the vice-viceroy who has instigated him.

The reason why he confessed this unnaturally far might be because of Interrogation and Coercion skills. Maybe I had better normally turn both skills OFF.

The Marquis will be discharging both the Baron and the Vice-viceroy the instigator. Since the Marchioness looks satisfied behind, leaving it to him should be fine. I thought that they would only be given some stern warnings, but since this means that they won't freely interfere with us again from now on, this is good enough.

I report to Arisa that the problem has been solved and they don't need to worry anymore.

The reason why the Marchioness conveniently intruded this time was thanks to Ms. Miteruna who properly acted upon the memo that I had left in the basement.

After I was taken by the carriage, she went to the Marquis' mansion to deliver the letter with my seal as instructed. Normally, a letter from some lower noble would have been postponed, and finished just like that, but it seems that as the result of the pastry that I had given back then, the maid gave the letter to the lady attendant, and the attendant gave it to the Marchioness, so she could quickly read the letter. I'll present them with various confections later.

Since Ms. Miteruna had come with a carriage, I lifted Lulu in and let them went home ahead. I was going to go back with them, but I couldn't reject the Marchioness' invitation to a dinner. It had become a dinner where we said our thank and apology to each side.

The princess profusely pestered me to tell stories about the labyrinth during the dinner, I answered her while taking care not to disturb other attendants. It would be bad if I carelessly told her some exaggerated stories and made her and plump-kun go to the

labyrinth again.

None of the the dinner menu, the so-called full course meal, use ingredients made of monsters at all, it's probably the Marquis' house chefs' fixation. If I have to say, there are not enough vegetables. Every dish was delicious, but the beef stew was superb. I'll recreate this taste for everyone later.

◇

I thank the coachman of the Marquis' house carriage for sending me to the mansion, and enter the mansion. Ms. Miteruna who had come to meet me gave some kind of basket to the coachman. Since I smelled something sweet, it was probably confections that Lulu had made.

I search the map while relaxing on the sofa. Looks like Sir Sokel has been arrested, he's currently being confined in one of the viceroy office's room. Shockingly enough, Besso is still running away. One of Besso's male friend has been apprehended by the explorer guild, he's in the dungeon of the west guild.

I have been surrounded by everyone when I finished the check and closed the map.

"Looks like it was terrible."
"Yeah, it's going to be uglier tonight though."
"Hoe? 'I won't let you sleep tonight', that kind?"
"Yes, yes, you're cute Arisa."

I off-handedly sweep off Arisa who's playing around.

"Since the lost thieves are more trouble than I thought, I'm thinking of seriously eliminating them. And also, it seems that there are carriers and slaves whom the lost thieves have captured and made to work, so I'd also like to rescue and shelter them."
"I'll help~?"
"I'll work hard nodesu!"
"Nn."

I pat the head of Tama who looks up from where she sits on my lap. Pochi and Tama peek from both sides, but I can't let them help me this time.
However, I feel slightly lonely that Arisa didn't retort back even though I said something quite absurd.

"I'm sorry but please stay at home this time. Mia, can you create Artificial Being like Aialiaze-san does?"
"Nn."
"Is there any that's suitable for surveillance?"
"...■■ Wing Ball"

No wait, I didn't say that you have to use it now.
Mia has called something that looks like a ball with wings. Can it do surveillance even

without eyes? Mia said that it's alright while beating her flat chest.

"Then, please watch the viceroy's mansion and the west guild with Mia's Wing Balls. Get in contact with me if a disturbance happens."
"Nn."
"Okke."

Now then, let's get some work done for the sake of safe labyrinth life.

Part 33 - Fiend Drug (3)

Satou's here. It's important to prepare things in advance. It's troublesome to do it while you're in the middle of a work, but if you don't prepare properly, you'll have a tough time later on. It doesn't feel like you need to do it until you learn it from the mistake though.

◇

Equipped with the artificial skin that I've made in the ivy mansion this afternoon, I change into a different person by using Disguise skill in full throttle. In addition, I equip a black mask to cover the area around my eyes.

Then, I change the Companion column into these. The name is Kuro, level 50, the occupation is bounty hunter, the skills are of shooting-related ones, rare magic, elf language, dragon language, and the exact opposite of Satou's modest stats. I recorded the various stats in the memo column so I won't mistake it whenever I disguise myself. I can use Nanashi if I want, but disguising myself will have no meaning if it becomes [Nanashi appears wherever Satou is], so I've decided to make the third persona.

"Satou-sama, what are you going to do with such a disguise?"
"I'm going to eliminate the lost thieves. Leriril, I'm sorry, but is it okay if I shelter the people who have been caught by the lost thieves here?"
"Please use the surface mansion if possible. There are many dangerous equipments in the underground."

Ah, I forgot about that.
I install a carved seal board for teleport on the surface mansion.

"Well then, I'm going. I'm counting on you to receive them."
"Yes, please leave it to me!"

Ah, I can't stop feeling odd at Leriril who replies promptly.

◇

I initially went to the safe area of Area 17 where the villa is.

First, I have to prepare the particular by finding the place where I can apprehend the lost thieves.

I mark all the lost thieves inside the labyrinth. There are approximately 300 people in total. 90% of them have committed felony like [Murder].

Next, I look for the working field that Rudaman talked about. I try searching the main ingredients of the fiend drug, Ruin Weed and Decay Stem in each area. Although there are places where they're growing wild, I pick ones where they're growing densely that have obviously been tended by humans, and have carriers and lost thieves nearby them. There are

three places all in all. Moreover, the places cannot be reached without going through troublesome areas.

Next, I search to see if there's any noble or their servants. Miss Gina's party [Moonlight], and other three noble parties come up. Judging from their positions, every party is innocent. They're quite enthusiastic to hunt by staying overnight. Even miss Gina who was at level 6 when I first met her has smoothly leveled up to 9 now. They're probably leveling up efficiently by constantly fighting higher-leveled enemies.

Next, I need to prepare the place where I can temporarily put the lost thieves. I can't exactly bring them to the authority in the middle of the night.

The chosen site is in one corner of Area 37. It's a bit deep but since it's an area with plant-type monsters, it has watering holes. I've picked the place where Gushing Holes can't geographically appear, and with only one entrance to it.

I look for the shortest route there. I can likely get there in 20 minutes if I break the walls in two passages along the way.

While relying on Invisibility and Spy skills I fly on the passage ceilings with Sky Drive. It seems that no one from the explorers parties along the way noticed me. Even if they do, they will probably regard it as a new kind of monster.

The hall where I've arrived at is quite a damp place with water dripping from the ceiling.

Fern-type plants are growing in colony. It looks like they're monsters. I tried throwing an ant leg from the storage to it, and the fern leaves became like a chainsaw, cutting the leg. I'm unsure whether this monster belongs to a fantasy or a horror work. Let's check the leaf's structure later.

I catch sight of monsters that look exactly like triceratops between the trees. It's probably not a normal dinosaur since violet flashes sometimes appear on its orange-colored transparent horns. While producing chewing sounds, these monsters are munching the leaves that are rotating like chainsaws without even caring about it. There are also two-meter class dragonfly-like monsters fluttering around.

Geez, it's completely a Cretaceous era.

I pull myself together and begin the clean-up. I swiftly cut down the stronger monsters with [Flexible Swords]. Since they'll likely smell if left alone, I put them into the storage with [Magic Hand] in no time flat.

After I've exterminated the big ones, I use [Remote Arrow] to eradicate the small fries. I retrieve the bodies just like I did with the big ones.

In just 10 minutes, I've completed clearing the monsters in the hall.

In the center of the room, I put a lot of bowls with clothes inside and dried meats from

insect-type monsters in jars. These dried meats were something that the mansion children had made for practice. They're terrible thing that even made the beastkin girls to put down their forks with just a single bite. It was clearly a failure, but I couldn't throw them away just like that either, so I stowed it away in the storage. Might as well use it for the lost thieves I'll be capturing.

Next, I block the only passage to the room with a big rock that I had stored in the storage from the aisle. Then I put a carved seal board on the middle of the passage. In addition, I make hard stone walls at a certain length in the passage afterward by using [Stone Wall] magic on the soil taken out of my storage.

The impromptu prison is complete with this.

◇

I catch the lost thieves with a series of capturing combo starting with Remote Stun.

"Who are you bastard! Who do you think this great me is!"
"Yeah yeah, I'll listen to you later."

I defeat the one who seems to be the boss of this lost thief group by pounding him with Remote Stuns. I then floor the rest of the small fries with the capturing combo.

Fumu, it's 55 people with this huh. I guess this is it for this base.

I lift the captured lost thieves with [Magic Hand] and teleport to Area 37. I advance on the passage, and then put the rock that block the way to the hall into my storage, opening the road.

Since the fallen lost thieves were crowding in front of the rock, I pushed the fresh lost thieves inside, putting them back into the room. After I've finished putting them inside, I place the rock again, blocking the passage. Booing broke out from the other side of the rock, but I ignored it since it didn't interest me.

However, it was a bit of failure. I forgot that there were also women among the lost thieves. I can let them stay in the same room, but I don't want that somehow. It can't be helped, I make another room with a door in the passage and decide to confine the female lost thieves there. Just like in the hall, I've also provided food, salt, two barrels of water, an empty jar, and a partitioning screen there.

I teleport back to the base just now and this time, I lift the carriers and the slaves with [Magic Hand], and take them to the mansion of ivy.

"H-here is?"
"Onee-chan, it's stars! I can see the stars."
"Outside? It's really the outside?"

Leriril who have waited for our coming claps her hands to gather their attentions.

"Be quiet children of human. This is the mansion of ivy, the place where sage-sama lives. I'll send you back to the labyrinth if you make an uproar."

The threat seems to be effective as the worked-up people have quieted down.

"Have your representative steps up. Porina, please explain the things to the representative."
"Yes, Kuro-sama."

Porina is the leader of the carriers whom I've saved first. She's level 7 despite being a baggage carrier. Her skills are [Carriage], [Cultivation], and [Harvesting].

I leave here to Leriril and Porina, and go back to the field earlier. I put one of the surveillance magic tool that I've created for the villa in one corner of the room. It looks like a two-meter long pole with a skull on its tip. The skull part has surveillance and information transmission mechanisms installed. The pole part has magic circuit for circulating magic power, and it can operate for three days if it's filled to the brim with magic power. I made this for surveillance around the villa, but since its appearance was unpopular (among the girls), I stowed it away.

I attack the remaining large-scale lost thief hideout and rescue the carriers who are working there. The bigger places are complete with this. Next, I assaulted the smaller lost thief groups that had dispersed in 10 places. Dealing with them was troublesome since they were running away in small groups.

Once I throw the last lost thief into the temporary prison, I take a breath.
It should be fine to take these guys to the west guild after the day has risen.

◇

In total, there are 220 people that I've saved. 110 people are carriers, 80 are slaves, and 30 are unexpectedly explorers. All of them are women. Apparently, men who were caught were either killed, or made to work as slaves until they made them became decoys for a special strategy (Train), killing them.

Most of the women seemed to be working on the field with shackles on their legs. Looks like they were also cultivating crops for the lost thieves' consumption besides the ingredients for the fiend drug. Due to that, there are some who have Cultivation, Harvesting, and Mixing skills.

There are a lot of female explorers at level 5, the ones who were higher than that were either solicited into becoming lost thieves, or killed.

Leriril was still up, but Porina and the others have gone asleep since they seemed to be tired, I'll talk to them again once the dawn arrives.

There are too many of them and not enough rooms in the mansion, so she has prepared beds in the hall and the corridors for them.

"Sa, Kuro-sama, actually, we have ran out of the reserve food. The vegetables grown with『Green Hand (Grow)』magic in the garden are at its limit too."
"Ah, sorry, I forgot to supply them."

Leriril leads me to the food warehouse and then I take out a large quantity of ingredients. Most of them are the ones I've collected in the lost thief hideouts, but I've also put things like wheat, potatoes, frog meat, salt and many other things. It should be enough for a while since they're around 6000 meal worth in all. I give her various kind of medicines since there are some unhealthy people among them.

"Is this a space magic?"
"Un, something like that."

It's dead at midnight now, and there's still quite some time until morning, so I go to the underground workshop with Leriril. Communications from Arisa comes at regular interval, reporting "No abnormal~ity" with a sleepy voice. I suggested her to alternate the monitoring work, but since she said okay, I'll let them work hard until Arisa and Mia doze off, and the regular contact gets cut off.

Sir Sokel doesn't have a peerage even though he's a noble. I feel that there's a real mastermind behind this, although I hope it's just an unfounded fear. If the mastermind is in this city, they should be raiding tonight. And right now until the early dawn is the time with the highest probability for the raid.

I thought of going back to the mansion for an instant, but I decided to prepare various things in the underground workshop and went to the streets.

Part 34 - Fiend Drug (4)

Satou's here. I feel that assassins mainly use poison as their weapons. I wonder since when their attack variations increase, like strangling with wire, or long-range needle attack on the vital spot. Nowadays, what's the weapon that's in fad for assassins. I'm slightly interested.

◇

"You're Sokel right?"
"W, who are you guys?"
"We're just running an errand."

There are two burglars who have invaded the viceroy office where Sir Sokel is confined. Both of them have completely covered their faces and worn thick brown mantles. Their hands are holding swords which leak out dubious light.

"From who?"
"From his highness of course."

The burglars finally noticed my presence with that question and hurriedly pointed their swords at me. While one of them proceeded to restrain me, the other one probably continuing on to erase Sir Sokel. I was unsure since I kicked the burglar before me away to the burglar in the interior, stopping him. Maybe I kicked them too strongly, both of the men have sunk into the wall. They would have come out to the room beyond if they had been pushed further.

"Goha, what a heavy kick."
"The rumored Mithril explorer huh."
"Wrong."

You guys actually have some leeway right?

The men look alright even after receiving an attack that should have normally fainted them. I think the coughed salivas have some red color mixed in, but they have enough mettle to stand up and ready their weapons.

Both are level 30 [Human] races, and their Status are [Magic Body Bestowal]. I think that it's most likely the status of someone who has drank fiend drug.

As a proof, even without chanting spells, purple flashes leaks out from their bodies, and then the area around their bodies are clad in flames.

"I don't know who you are, but I'll have you die together with that man."
"We'll offer you to the death. We are fiends. The ones who will become the protectors of the new world that his highness will build."

Their words have strange accents mixed in. Their grotesque figures were hidden in the

mantles which I saw for an instant. Half of their faces have become like tortoise shell, and their eyes are like compound eyes of insects. They look quite grotesque even compared to various demi-humans I've seen so far.

They are still humans despite the grotesque though, so let's proceed without killing them. I have to at least draw that line, or else I feel that I will become a demon lord myself.

Since they are tough enough to stand against a blow from me, I hit them with normal [Short Stun] instead of [Remote Stun]. Let's go easy at first and go with 20 shots. The Rhinoceros Beetle back then could endure 20 shots, so let's go with that many.

One of them was hit with the magic, broke through the wall behind, and vanished into the next room. The other one seemed to have dodged several short stun orbs with his intuition, but the rest of the orbs caught up to him, and sunk him into the outer wall in a strange posture. The outer wall of this city seems to be quite sturdy.

Neither lose their consciousness. The drug seems to be quite excellent as a boost medicine. There are probably some people who have drank it at least once in the battlefield.

What should I do.... Ah, right. I didn't think about it.

Let's test it on one of them.
It's a success. After taking my blow, he's fallen down unconscious.

"Y, you bastard, what did you do?"
"No way would I expose my secret to the enemy right?"

While evading his attack, I destroy his reinforced state with [Break Magic], and then thoroughly snatch his magic power with [Mana Drain]. I also drain the magic power that's circulating on his weapon. I don't know how great is the magic circuit granted by the fiend drug, but it shouldn't work if the magic power that works as its fuel is cut off.

Finally, I hit him, who has his magic power stripped bare, unconscious and it's the end. The enemy still has sturdiness fits for his level, but his unreasonable toughness from just before has disappeared.

I restrain the men with magic-sealing ivy. This is something that I've made from the ivy of Thorn Foot in the workshop earlier, it has the same effect as magic-sealing chain. Unlike the usual, the maker is Kuro this time, not Nanashi.

I reported to Arisa with Telephone that I had taken care of viceroy office.

◇

I can hear the footsteps of the viceroy office guards who have finally noticed the uproar, heading here.

『Goha』

『What? There's an invisible wall here?』
『There's a magician among the burglar. You guys go from another stairs. You go call magician-dono here.』

Sorry for them, but I'm blocking the passage for now.

"Now then, Sir Sokel. Would you answer questions from your life savior?"
"Ah, I'll tell you. I'll tell you, so please shelter me in a safe place."
"Alright. I'll bring you to a safe place if you answer honestly."

I asked Sir Sokel who was desperately clinging to me about the mastermind.

"His highness is a blood relative of Shiga royal family. I think he's a man who has just come of age. I don't know his true identity since he always wore recognition inhibition mask whenever we met."
"How could you make a dangerous drug like fiend drug from the order of such a man."
"It's because his guardian is Marquis Kelten. He also hid his face, but I immediately knew it was him from his peculiar way of talking. I thought that a chevalier like me would be able to become a baronet if I cooperated with someone who had Marquis Kelten, one of the eight marquis along with his tremendous influence on the army, on his back."

I think that's a coup d'etat flag though, will the next kingdom conference be alright?

"In truth you're just disposable huh."
"That's right, how laughable."

I get information about his highness like the way he speaks, his figure, and various things that weren't hidden by the recognition inhibition mask from the listless self-deprecating Sir Sokel. It's really not the third prince huh. According to Toruma Memo, the fourth prince is 18 years old, the fifth prince is 14 years old, since the second child of the king's younger brother is 15 years old, this one is suspicious. There doesn't seem to be any unacknowledged illegitimate child of the king, but the previous king and the king's younger brother seem to have strong lust, so there are a lot of candidates that come up.

Now then, I guess I'll shelter him since he listened and all.
I release the [Mana Wall] that had confined the guards.

"You bastard! Who are you."
"I'll shelter Sir Sokel for a while. Those men over there are assassins sent by the mastermind called his highness. They're high levels and also users of fiend drug. Don't let your guard down even if they're unconscious. They're as strong as low-rank demon at least. There should be a jail for high level criminals in the labyrinth city right? Put them there."

I intentionally ignore their words, and tell the burglars' motive and other things unilaterally. I change my tone from how Satou usually is, and speak in slightly high-handed manner.

Since I'm currently in a disguise and all, I introduce myself as [Kuro].

After I've finished telling them, I teleport away with Sir Sokel along with the bed he's sitting on. The destination is in the labyrinth. I took him to the deepest working field of the fiend drug. There are multiple intelligence systems here after all.

"H, here is?"
"The inside of the labyrinth."
"What?　A, are you going to kill me?!"
"I don't have such intention. Here is a safety zone. There's no gushing hole, and monsters and people won't come here except for some odd plants that are growing here. It's the most suitable place for a shelter."

I take him to the row house where the abducted people had lived in. There is no rain in the labyrinth, but sometimes natural water drip down from the ceiling, so the roof is necessary.

I put the bed from earlier in a relatively large room. Since he asked if it was space magic, I noncommittally affirmed it. I take out daily necessities like food and water from Item Box and put it on a table in one corner of the room. I also leave a cheap knife and hatchet, although I think it's unnecessary. Any one of them are things that was used by the abducted people.

It may look like I'm doing too much, but leaving a noble who can't even cook for himself alone inside the labyrinth is cruel enough. However, I want him to taste a bit of the anxiety and pain of the people who have been captured and made to work hard by the lost thieves.
I've told him that this is a safety zone, and even though it's the truth, Sir Sokel still gets frightened from rustling sounds of the grass and small animals, he's probably going to sleep while in fear of getting suddenly attacked by monsters.

"Well then, I'll supply you with food in 10 days time. If you don't eat them sparingly, no one will come to save you even if you starve, so be careful."

I leave behind Sir Sokel who looks like he's going to protest, and go back to the mansion of ivy.

◇

When I had returned to the mansion of ivy, fire and smoke from afar came into my view.

『This is Arisa-chan, over?』

I received a Telephone contact from Arisa. Her home-telephone way of speaking has finally disappeared, but this time it's in transceiver style. Please talk a bit more normal.

"It's me. I saw the fire. Is that the west guild?"
『Un, some men with the same clothing as the ones who attacked the viceroy office earlier came flying from the sky. They have wings on their back.』
"I understand, I'll go there immediately. I'm counting on you to keep watching the viceroy office."
『Roger~』

I fly in the labyrinth sky with Sky Drive. From the sky, I see that one section of the guild hall is burning. I tilt my head in puzzlement when I look at the stats of the people attacking the guild. I understand that they've used the fiend drug, but their skill compositions are that of an assassin, not a magician. It seem they can use magic, but since it's wind magic, I don't know the cause of that fire.

The flame stretches out from the ground.

With my skill-strengthened vision, I see the man in dark brown clothing evading the flame while flying in the sky.

Oy, oy, that flame is from the guildmaster's magic huh. What are you doing burning your own base. Why are there so many pyromaniacs among fire magicians.

I want to prevent the fire from spreading further so I strike down the flying burglar to the ground with [Remote Stun] magic. People would have normally died from the fall, but they're really some strong bunch. Big shield Jell and some high level explorers who have come out of the guild hall proceed to arrest the burglar.

You guys act too early.

The burglar forcibly flings away Jell and the others with his super strength from the fiend drug. When he was about to fly away once again, the flame bullets of [Multi Flame] magic that the guildmaster had released hit him. The burglar is roasted together with the ground around him from the countless flame bullets, and rolls on the ground.

As expected of level 50. The power is incredible as long as it hits.

Since she had begun to chant [Inferno], I intervene. Just like the magic earlier, it's not something that should be used in the middle of the city.

By using Flash Drive from the sky, I land on the back of the burglar who has put out the fire and stood up. The force was a bit too much, I could feel several of his bones breaking. Looks like it's a bit too much no matter how sturdy the opponent is. Just like with the guys caught in the viceroy office, I cancel the reinforcing magic, snatch his magic power, and bind him with magic-sealing ivy. It's a simple works that only lasted several seconds.

"Who are you!"
"Rather than that, put this guy into the prison. This happens just when I've come to exterminate the lost thieves, looks like strange fellows are rampant here. As expected of Labyrinth City I guess."

I vaguely swept off the guildmaster who had stopped her chanting and asked my identity, and then threw the binded burglar nearby their feet. Then I fly to the sky, and take out ocean water from the storage to extinguish the burning guild hall. Once I've confirmed that most of the fire have been extinguished, I go back to the mansion of ivy.

Good grief, I can't laugh at the fact that the guildmaster is the one who created the biggest

damage here. I wonder how is she not demoted and fired like that.

Part 35 - Selection Test

Satou's here. In recent games, urgent quests that suddenly appear as time-limited quest with their tedious work has given me a bit of stress. Yet an urgent quest in real life feels like a mere bothersome work that's been pushed into me, I wonder why is that?

◇

It's been three days since I eliminated the fiend drug users. Besso and the explorer who were in possession of the fiend drug have been captured by the guild, but there is no surprise attack since that incident.

The next day, by the guildmaster's request, we went to Rudaman's hideout and the cultivation fields, but those places had already been vacated and only uninhabited field remained. I'm the one who have made it uninhabited so there's no mistake. The guild staff onee-san who was going with us only collected the Ruin Weed and Decay Stem as evidences, and then we went back to the labyrinth city.

"Then, the field you found had been emptied huh?"
"Yes, since foodstuff and daily necessities were also gone, they might have moved to another place."
"We also searched for something like hidden rooms, but there was no one remaining just like chevalier-sama's said. They weren't moved by the lost thieves mastermind since there were unharvested ruin weed and decay stem that remained, maybe they might have ran away by themselves?"

The guild staff onee-san who had gone together with us in the investigation is reporting the result in the guildmaster room.

"We also tried searching the neighboring passages with magic, but we couldn't find anyone."
"That so, thank you for your hard works."
"Should we dispatch explorers again to search for the abducted people?"
"Think of the place, the place. The only ones that can search in such a deep area like that are the Red Iron bunch. Even if they were running away on their own, they would have ended up eaten by monsters before they could reach the surface."

It seems the guildmaster has decided to give up on rescuing, or rather searching for those people.

"They might have been unexpectedly saved by some explorers and returned to the surface."
"That would be nice."
"I also think that the possibility is low, but I wish that they have safely returned to the surface and gone back to their peaceful life."
"I pray that there isn't anyone with compounding and alchemy skills."

While vaguely sweeping off my words, the guildmaster said so.

"Is there something bad about it?"
"Yeah, it's bad. Someone who has the Alchemy skill must be involved in the creation of the fiend drug, even the one who has the Compounding skill should be able to prepare for the making of fiend drug. These guys will most certainly be forced into becoming slaves and made to be in non-disclosure condition to prevent them from divulging the method to make the fiend drug, after that they will probably be confined in the kingdom research facility their whole life."
"Are the other people who are involved in the cultivation alright?"
"Yeah, putting aside the Ruin Weed, Decay Stems can be found in the labyrinth relatively easy so there should be no problem."

Fumu, that means I can release people besides the ones with Compounding or Alchemy skills before long.
Then, the guild staff-san reservedly interjected.

"Umm....May I?"
"What? Say it?"
"People normally don't think of breaking through the labyrinth where monsters are crawling, away from their safety zone, I think such an idea comes up because guildmaster and chevalier-sama are strong. Even if there are some people who come up with the idea, the majority won't move unless there's a reason like having limited food. In actuality, they have crops from the cultivated field."
"In other words, there must be secret hideouts nearby where they can move safely to huh?"
"Yes, there might be hidden passages that couldn't be detected by the young lady retainer of Chevalier-sama."
"Then I guess I'll torture Rudaman until he spits it out."

Looks like the guildmaster is going to torture Rudaman after this, but since it doesn't seem like she'll kill him, let's not mind it.

◇

I acquire the consent of the women sheltered in the mansion of ivy to stay there by saying that it's because "They will be killed by the mastermind behind the lost thieves if they get out right now". Strangely enough, there were only a handful of people who persistently wanted to go back to the city, most didn't seem eager. I tell them to be patient for 10 days. I'll do something in the meantime.

At the present time, these women are unlikely to be eliminated by the mastermind.

According to the guildmaster's story, I can probably release the people who don't have compounding or alchemy skills. Since the fact that this is the mansion of ivy have been known to them I can't release those people right now. It should work out somehow if I bring them to populated places nearby the royal or the duchy capital, or maybe some villages in Muno barondom and then give them a new name and ID.

I should search some places that can accept them.

◇

"Do you want to become an explorer~!?"
"""Yeah!""

Amplified with Mia's magic, Arisa's voice is echoing through the labyrinth city outer wall. We're currently in a temporary tent right outside the labyrinth city.

100 baggage carriers who aspire to become explorers have gathered before Arisa. We're going to decide the pupils for Iruna and Jenna of Beautiful Wings from among them.

There are 70 boys and 30 girls. They're children who have gathered after hearing publicity talks from Iruna and Jenna during the past three days. Although I said children, the age range spans from 10 to 18 years old. The mean age range is at around 12-14 years old.

Iruna explains the selection test to the children with her voice alone without relying on magic.

"We will choose 15 children among you. First we will choose five children with fast legs. It's important to have fast legs in the labyrinth for scouting and luring monsters. Run once you hear this flute as a signal. The first five children who run around Selbira outer wall for a lap pass."

The children began to run when Arisa blew the flute. Some got their feet entwined by other's foot, some were tumbled by their own feet. The one thing they have in common is that every one of them stands up on their own without crying even while covered in dust, and run. They're truly strong-willed.

I used [Clairvoyance] magic along the way to see if there were any fallen children, but there were only two who had fallen from anemia. I contacted Nana who was patrolling with a horse by using [Telephone], and had them withdrawn.

For some reaosn, Pochi and Tama had somehow started running too. They must have been tempted. Pochi was the winner by a wide margin. Tama was unusually worked up and challenged her again.

When the two had finished running, I looked back at the winning children who had been passed quite far.

"Damn, to lose to a dogkin and a catkin children. It's a disgrace for a rabbitkin."
"I can't believe I lost to someone beside Usasa."

The first and second place winners looked at Pochi and Tama in frustration. They are 14 years old rabbitkin girl and boy. These children are separated quite far from the third place. The third place is a ratkin, while the fourth and fifth are human boys.

There are 10 children who have failed the first test. These 10 children are doing physical exercise lead by Lulu to build their stamina nearby the temporary HQ.

The second test will begin after a short break with sandwiches. During this break, we distributed water for re-hydration and baked sweets for calorie intake. It'd be troubling if they faint from hunger along the way.

"The next one is endurance run. The first five children who have ran five laps around the Selbira outer wall pass. Lunches are waiting for the children who have ran for more than two laps. Do your best."
""""Yeah!""

For some reason, the answer this time have more power in them than the first time. I intended to let them eat unconditionally for the test this time since we had already prepared meals for 100 people from the beginning, but since it was so effective like they have a carrot dangling in front of their eyes, I couldn't intercede. However, besides the leading pack, many children who were unlikely to be chosen by the selection members stopped running after two laps.

The boys were strong for endurance marathon too, there were three boys and two girls. This time humans were strong, among the five children, three boys and girls who had dark-skin like Roji were particularly strong. They looked calm enough to run several more laps.

The remaining five children will be chosen after the meal break. By the way, the meal menu is croquet made from Leaping Potato and insect meat, and Walking Bean with insect meat soup.

The meal this time were prepared not only by Ms. Miteruna and the seven apprentice maids from our mansion, but also five baggage carrier girls who could cook. I'm planning to have Ms. Miteruna taught these five girls, and then permanently employ them as personnels for food distribution on the orphanage and the slum. They are plain and honest girls who are at 14-18 years old.

"Well then let's begin the last test. Use the twig we have distributed earlier like you would a sword. Yes, stretch out your elbow. Keep that posture, the one who doesn't lower their arm until the end passes."

Screams broke out from the children, but this is a selection to choose the last five children with will-power. It's out of question if they can't even endure the training before entering the labyrinth.

The majority of them fell in the first one hour, but it was quite long for the remaining seven, once the last one dropped out after three more hours, the five children had been decided.

The final selected members have 11 boys and 4 girls. The plan is to have Iruna and Jenna teach these children the basic for 10 days on the surface, afterward, five of them are going to be taken alternately in three turns into the labyrinth, each group spend five days, 15 days in total, to be leveled up to level 7.

Since the contract with Iruna and Jenna is for three months, the children who have failed in the test this time still have two more chances.

"Everyone, thank you for today! We will open the test again next month, so to the one who have failed this time, please don't give up!"

With Arisa's closing words, the disqualified children go back to the west gate in groups of twos and threes. Everyone is given three baked sweets as the consolation prize. These sweets seems to become the spreading bait for the children who didn't participate this time.

◇

Iruna and Jenna explain the plan hereafter to the children who have passed. There were shouts of joy particularly when they heard that they were going to be provided with three meals and were free to ask for second.

The children are going to be drilled on the vacant land nearby which I've borrowed.

I was going to give the selected children the same ant armors that I had given to Iruna and Jenna, but Arisa strongly objected and warned me. You should not give them cheat equipments if you're going to let them become an independent explorer after the training is over, unless you're making them into your retainers.

Not only Arisa, Iruna and Jenna also stopped me. The reason is a bit different; if they have an armor that protect them from getting hurt from a monster's attack, they will neglect avoiding attacks. Moreover, if they don't get some slight wounds, they won't learn the way to stop bleeding during an actual fight, so I'm told that such armors will not let them learn the importance of them.

When I consulted to Iruna and Jenna about the right equipment for the children, they recommended the equipment called bone equipment. They seem to be goblin bones that are knitted on jacket and trousers made from knitted grasses. It seems the basic equipment advancement for labyrinth explorer is as follow : wood chips equipment to bone equipment to insect husk equipment and then to insect shell equipment.

As for the weapon, the plan is to have them use a club made from goblin thighbone, and then a short spear made from ant claw from the second area on. For the shield, it seems they're planning to use leather shield. Iruna and Jenna bought these equipments cheaply from the apprentices at the shopping district. I've revised some of the weakly-made points, so they shouldn't incur major injury from low level enemies.

By the way, the two currently use mantis-type equipments. They were very happy when I gave it as a present for the celebration of getting to level 15. Apparently, mantis-type equipments are proof of veteran in the labyrinth city. I probably shouldn't say that they only look different on the outside, as compared to the ant equipment from before, there's hardly any difference in the defensive power.

Now then, if I need permissions from the Marchioness and the guildmaster to hold regular food distribution in the city, let's get them to issue it.

Part 35-2 - Banquet and the Truth of Beria [Revised Version]

Satou's here. Back then, quitting your job and becoming independent by opening a cafe was popular, but nowadays, it seems that retiring to the countryside and buying a plot of agriculture land to lead a slow life there has become popular.

◇

I was invited to Baronet Dyukeli's mansion under the pretext of an apology for causing me trouble regarding lady Merian.

Looks like I'm not the only one who's been invited to the banquet, the shopkeepers of magic tool shops and medicine shops under his control in the labyrinth city have also come.
When I was in the reception room before the banquet began, lady Merian in a dress apologized for the trouble and thanked me for the rescue. She left the room while whispering me to keep the matter about her going to the swordsmanship dojo a secret from her father.
Her impish smile must have been just my imagination.

◇

"You should get acquainted with them since you're going to be an explorer of the labyrinth city."

He introduced me as his daughter's savior to the shopkeepers.

During the banquet, it naturally has become the talk about goods that are selling well and ones that are in serious shortage in the labyrinth city. Especially the healing medicines, it seems that even for the shops under baronet Dyukeli with their inflated prices as the viceroy's ally, the medicines are usually out of stock there.

"Moreover, if we want to create the healing medicine in this city, there is no choice but to stock the ingredients from the merchants in the neighboring cities who sell them at a high price, or pick them from the mountain with wolves after pushing our way through the wasteland."
"It sure is hard to compete against the guild that's selling the healing medicine without minding the profit."
"That's cause those guys are selling at the price of the Royal Capital."
"It really is, they can stock the medicines easier."

I see, although it's obvious that there are difference between the buyer's and the seller's perspectives, there is such a circumstance behind it huh. Although I shouldn't swallow their story entirely just like that, it doesn't seem like they're just being too greedy.

"However, that means during the time when it's out of stock, explorers dive into the labyrinth without even having a way to heal themselves?"
"No, poor explorers will go with leaves of Beria they've plucked."

"That still hasn't changed even now."

It seems Beria is a cactus-like plant that's growing wild on the wasteland around the labyrinth city.
They were also growing along the highway's sides if I'm not mistaken.

Beria is a succulent plant with aloe-like thick needled leaves growing around its cactus body, and as a matter of fact they're edible, while the leaves can be used to cure bleeding or burn.

As for the center fruit, even though it's relatively tasty, it has an alias [Beggar Killer] since it seems that it causes diarrhea which goes on until you're dehydrated if you eat it too much. It can make children and the elderly who don't have much physical strength to die.

Looks like the baggage carriers who have failed to get a job pick those fruits and sell them in front of the city gate to earn enough income to sustain their livelihood. I ignored it since there were many peddlers who were selling things before the gate, but there were such things being sold there huh. I'll pay more attention to various things next time.

"Maybe it's possible to make a healing medicine from Beria leaf?"
"There's a legend about the sage-sama of olden days who can create a magic potion from Beria leaf, but it's a lost tale from a long time ago."
"Nowadays,『Healing medicines made from Beria leaf』is a phrase only said by the frauds in labyrinth city, it's something that no one believes."

By sage, does he mean Trazayuya?
I searched about Beria on his documents, but there were no hit.

When I go to the elf hometown next time, I'll ask Tsutoreiya-shi the alchemist if he knows about the recipe to make the magic potion from Beria leaf.

◇

Later, I was able to see various treasured items on his shops when I was going around them.

Among the items, it seems that the silver sword of ant wing is quite popular. It was more of a gray sword than silver, but it seems to be the easiest magic sword to make from monster materials in the labyrinth city. Since the way to create things from ant wing is written in Trazayuya document, I'll try to make one.

The magic scrolls which I looked forward the most had the same line-ups as the duchy capital since they were all provided by Viscount Shimen.

Interestingly enough, the ignition rod that most explorers use seem to be sold at high price in the neighboring earldom and small kingdoms. It's cheap in the labyrinth city since it's mass produced by amateur craftsmen from scrap magic cores, but in other territories, the rod is made by full-fledged craftsmen from proper magic cores like other magic tools, so it's expensive there.

◇

The Marchioness has requested me to redevelop an experimental farm outside the labyrinth city, although it has nothing to do with Beria fruit.
It seems to be a place near a small water source where the previous viceroy created an experiment to grow wheat, but was abandoned since the yield was bad.

It was right when I was looking for place to employ the slave girls I had saved as Kuro, so I agreed to it.

The explorer-turned-thieves who had built a hideout there were trampled by Pochi and Tama, turned into crime slaves and taken to the coal mine.

Since the land has become barren, I decide to grow Beria fruits for healing medicines, beans for food, and tomatoes. Especially the tomatoes, I expect to mass produce them.

◇

About the healing medicine recipe made from Beria leaf, when I went to meet Tsutoreiya-shi to consult it, he quickly wrote the recipe and handed it to me. It seemed that it was a well-known recipe in the elf hometown, so Trazayuya didn't leave it on his documents since it was too common.

I came back to labyrinth city, immediately made it, and confirmed its effect on the pupils of the training school.
Since the effect isn't especially strong, I guess I'll make it public.

I wrote the recipe on some papers, put them on treasure chests, and then hid them on various places inside the labyrinth. It's a little surprise for beginner explorers.
I've divided the recipe into several pieces of paper with numbering, and put them in treasure chests.

They should understand that the recipe is real since I've put a sample of Beria healing medicine together with it.
Just in case, I've prepared six sets of the recipe instead of just one.

The first piece of the recipe was found five days later, the labyrinth city was enveloped in a slight festive mood.

In a little while, low level cheap healing medicines should spread.

While thinking that, I watch over the children who are happily harvesting Berias that are growing wildly around the labyrinth city.

Part 36 - The Man in Black Clothes

◇

"How is it? Even among the many slave trading companies in the royal capital, only Orield firm has these array of product lines."

The trader made a signal, and then 10 beautiful women and girls entered the room. It's quite a sight for sore eyes since every one of them is only wearing a thin piece of cloth.
I've come to the royal capital to look for a person with a certain skill needed for my plan.

"Orield-dono, I should have told you that I'm looking for educated people."
"Yes, of course. Every one of these girls can read and write letters, they have also been properly educated on other things."

I confirm the skills of these girls once again. Only the former Serushioku noble girls have the Shiga kingdom language skill, so I can't judge it from their skills. If I'm not mistaken, the country of Serioshioku was the country of princess Menea's fiance, the one that was destroyed by the weaselkins.

I check them one by one, and confirm whether the girl with the skill I want is among them.
The slave trader takes a languid pose while explaining each of the girl's skills and appeal points.

"Leave the second and the third ones from the right, and then the girl on the left end, and also, let's see, the red haired girl over there."
"Yes, understood."

Once the explanation was finished after about 10 minutes, I asked the trader to leave the target girl, and three other girls as dummies behind. The dummies are the former noble girls, and a girl who can use life magic.

When the slave trader gives a signal, the girls strip off their thin cloth.
No, it's nice and all but I'm not asking for that kind of service.

"How much are they each?"
"Yes, this former duke daughter is 300 gold coins. She has the blood of the royal family although of a small kingdom, she's an excellent girl who has not only Etiquette skill, but also Shiga Kingdom Language and Poem Recital skills."

She looks somewhat strong-willed. She's fair-skinned with normal breasts, but her waist looks like the type that can have an easy delivery. Her curly blond hair coil around her voluptuous body. 17 years old. Level 4.

"This former earl daughter is 200 gold coins. Her lineage is a bit inferior compared to the girl just now, but she's obedient, and her body is splendid, she would be useful for various things."

This timid girl has splendid breasts that are nearly D-cups, she's also fair-skinned. She has soft-looking straight long silver hair. Her eyes are of beautiful blue. Her skills are Shiga Kingdom Language and Etiquette. 16 years old. Level 3.

Up until now are just the opening act, the next one is the main act.

"This one is a girl who worked as a heraldry official at the castle of Earl Lesseu. She was rude to Earl Lesseu-sama, and got turned into a slave. Her body is somewhat childish, but her ice-like transparent beautiful face is something to look forward in the future. Her skills are plain with only Heraldry and Naming, but of course she can read and write letters and she excels at filing documents, so she should be helpful for merchant-dono. Her price is slightly cheap at 30 gold coins."

This girl who looks like she's given up on life is the reason why I've gone out of my way to come to this firm. I'm thinking of changing the name of the girls with compounding skills who were capture by the lost thieves, and let them hide themselves in other cities.

She's quite a beauty just like the slave trader's praised. She's beautiful enough to be compared to Arisa and Mia, although of different kind (of beauty). Her breasts are small, but they're at least A-cup. Her hair is pale gold. Her small lips and her lax-focused ice blue eyes only foster her lifelessness. Her name is Tifaliza. 15 years old. Level 5. Her title is [Orield's Slave], but there are hidden titles like [Superficial Courtesy], [Rude One].

I feel like looking for another person with Naming skill when I look at these titles.

"This one is a spell-user girl. She also worked in the castle of Earl Lesseu-sama like the one before, but she also made some mistake, and was turned into a slave."
"Fumu, she must be expensive since she can use life magic right?"
"No, she's only as much as 50 gold coins."
"Fumu, how many times can she use magic in succession?"
"I hear that it's about twice."

This girl's level is only 2 even though she can use life magic. She probably got it from a gift. Although her looks is inferior compared to the girls before her, she's cute enough to warrant the praise. She's a 16 years old girl with dark brown eyes under her red hair. Her name is Nell. She's about as tall as me, her breasts size seems to be around Lulu's. I feel that her waist is a bit thin.

"I'll buy the heraldry user and the spell-user for 30 gold coins. The fallen noble girls have good looks and lineages, but I don't need them if they need other people to take care of them."

The two girls have market price at 48 gold coins so I haggle it to a bit cheaper price, but the slave trader agreed to it just like that. Afterward, the person with [Contract] skill came, and then the trade is completed. I've confirmed that the girls' titles have changed to [Kuro's Slaves].

When I was leaving, I passed by a slave, and felt like I had been duped by the slave trader.

That slave had the Naming skill, and priced only at 2 gold coins. Even though I knew that there were three slaves with Naming skill here, I feel a bit of fail.

On the other hand, since other slaves who can use life magic aren't much different in price than Nell, they probably judge the price of magicians from their ability, not look.

"Well then Kuro-sama, please come to our firm again whenever you need slaves."
"Yeah, I'll come here first thing first when that happen."

I replied with some lip service to the slave trader who was rubbing his hands, and then went back to the inn by riding the carriage that had been arranged in front of the firm.

◇

When we enter the inn room, I take out one-piece clothes and sandals, and put them on the bed. I looked back when I noticed some rustling sounds.

Why are you two taking off your clothes?

Well alright. I've already seen these girls' naked bodies in the slave trader firm just now anyway. They're clean enough to not need to be washed with life magic.

"Change into these clothes. We will leave this inn shortly."
"I understand."
"Yes."

I can't exactly stare at girls changing clothes, so I write a letter saying that I have vacated the inn, and put it on the table. I've already paid the inn in advance of course.

I took the two who had finished changing to the mansion of ivy's basement by teleporting through two relay points. I've put the relay points when I was going to the royal capital, they are 300 kilometers apart each. I've also put a teleport point nearby the royal capital of course.

No coup d'etat occurs on the royal capital. I don't know whether I've prevented it, or the notion that coup d'etat will occur in the royal capital is just an unfounded fear. I searched for places with fiend drugs just in case, but they were in the medicine warehouse of the normal army facility, it might be just their equipment.

The reports from the viceroy and the guildmaster should have arrived here, so there's no need for me to butt in on purpose.

◇

"Teleport magic.... Chantless.... Is master the hero of Saga empire?"
"No. I forbid you to disclose the fact that I can use chantless magic. This is an order."

I take off the Collars of Subordination from the neck of the two who consent. They had

Collar of Subordination since they were treated as crime slaves.

"Eh? How did you take it off?"
"How, even high ranking magicians need to perform a ritual to take them off without the key..."

I take the two who are surprised to the living room.

"Kuro-sama, welcome back. Are these people the human resources in question?"
"That's right."
"Kuro-sama, welcome back."
"Porina, gather everyone besides the five people with the Compounding skill in the courtyard. Leriril, check if there's any girl left in the building."

I instruct Porina while receiving a tea from her. I ordered the two slaves to stay here while they're drinking the tea, and then I went to the courtyard.

◇

"Explorers, gather. You're going to keep them safe in the labyrinth."

I announce so, and then teleport to the labyrinth together with the 47 armed explorers. Of course I held a long wand, and even used a dummy chant.

"Here is the first area. Monsters rarely appear here, but I ask you to escort them from here to the great stairway of the labyrinth entrance. I'm entrusting the foremost person to be the commander of the escort."
"Aye sir, Kuro-sama. I will tell them that we have ran away from the lost thief."

I haven't let them bath for the past two days in order to have some credibility in that claim. Their equipments are something that have been taken from the lost thieves. They're relatively good compared to the ant armor and bone armor. I had given the silver sword of ant wing magic sword to the commander in exchange for the bothersome job I asked her. This weapon used ant bone as the base, and it had become a transparent silver sword when I made it by following the recipe. It's slightly more fragile compared to a normal iron sword when it's not filled magic power, but it's a sharp magic weapon that can cut nicely. It's written in Trazayuya document, and it seems to be a relatively major magic sword in the labyrinth city. It's roughly about 30 gold coins worth. I made it as Nanashi, so the maker is blank like the casted magic swords.
It's cheaper to make than casted magic swords, but since making it is quite laborious, I probably won't make it again unless it was a request.

Continuing on, I divide 87 carriers in two groups and then teleport with them. Lastly, I teleport with 23 slaves whose masters are still alive. I let one act as a guard in five-person groups, and then they escaped out of the labyrinth.

I had given five big copper coins to each people who were released through the labyrinth, enough for their immediate livelihood. I felt that it wasn't enough, but since Porina said that

I gave too much, I didn't give more.

Now then, excluding the five people with the Compounding skill, there are three explorers, and 55 slaves remaining in the mansion of ivy.

The remaining slaves didn't have a master, so they requested me to become their master. I'm thinking of releasing the one who seems possible to go independent with their worker-type skills, while the rest can be released after I find them jobs.

The explorers who remain are the noble girls from foreign kingdoms. I have no choice but to leave them behind since they were crying and saying that they'd better off dead than having to endure the rumor about how they've escaped from lost thief.

Now then, I guess I'll continue on to the next step.

Part 37 - The Man in Black Clothes (2)

Satou's here. I guess communication in the ancient times relied on smoke signal and carrier pigeons? There were things like fast horses or postmen, but there weren't anything real time like the internet and emails. Although there is magic in the other world, they don't seem to be too wide-spread.

◇

I take the girls with the compounding skill to the living room.

"I'll confirm it once again. Are you prepared to have your name changed and live as a different person?"
""""Yes, please.""""

The five girls voiced their consent in unison.

"Tifaliza, give a new name for these five. Starting from her it's Ann, Beth, Chris, Debbie, and Emily."

It's a secret that I take the name from ABCDE in sequence.
Since Tifaliza used up all her magic power after naming three of them, I refilled it with [Magic Power Transfer].

I take the five freshly named girls to the hiding place that I've prepared on the nearest town to the labyrinth city, Furusau. For the ex-slaves, Chris and Emily, I need to do the troublesome procedure of making them into slaves once again and then release them. After we finished the procedures in Furusau town slave trader, Ann, Beth, and Debbie also got their IDs. I made the hesitating guard to grip a silver coin when the IDs were being issued, so it had gone smoothly.

"Now then, make the items written in this list."
"Yes, Kuro-sama."

I give a bundle of recipes to Beth and Chris who can read. I will provide their living expense during their life in this hideout temporarily in exchange for them to make the troublesome intermediately materials. Since Emily the ex-slave has swordsmanship skill, I give her an iron sword for self-protection.

◇

Next, I take the slaves to the hideout on the junction town of Kelton located beyond Furusau town. The hideout is reasonably big residence, but 55 people still can't enter all at once as expected, so I only take 20 people at a time. I had their ears plugged and blindfolded since glossing over the chantless magic would be troublesome.

I go visit the smallest slave trader firm. I make the slaves to wait in the refuge.

"Is there anyone inside!"
"You don't have to yell, I can hear you. My ears are fine."
"I have a request."
"Leave it to me. We have everything to your liking, either the blond big breasted girls, or the silver haired little girls. If you have a peculiar taste, tell us beforehand okay. We'll teach them how."

I stop the battered middle-aged slave trader who's happily promoting while taking out a slide rule.

"There are 55 slaves who have lost their masters. I want you to make me their master with [Contract], and then release 25 of them. As for the payment for all those procedures including the necessary overhead, how about 20 gold coins?"
"I'll take it! Let's do it, like I'd let other people take such a delicious job."
"Very well, then, follow me."

The trader leaves the store to his boy staff, wears an overcoat, and then goes out of the store. I take him to the refuge with a carriage. I had the slave trader blindfolded like in some common plot. There's no particular problem even if he knows, but it's not really good if some strange rumor spread either.

Since the slave trader has ran out of magic power after using Contract for 15 people, I give him magic power recovery potion to drink, let him take a break, and resume the work. During each break, I bring the slaves who have been contracted back to the mansion of ivy, and then bring along new slaves out.

The slave trader seemed to be doubtful, but, losing to the gold before his eyes, he didn't ask unnecessary questions. Cheapskate is the best.

I brought the slave trader, who's blindfolded again, back and presented him with the promised 20 gold coins and high-class liquor I had bought in Furusau. For some reason, the slave trader's face cramped when he was receiving the liquor. He must be very tired. Go drink some good liquor and dream good things.

◇

Now then, about the freed slaves, since they have production-related skills, I'm thinking of building production tenement houses which also double as workshops in the city's vacant lot for them to live in. I had asked Porina, who had gone out together with the rescued explorers, to buy the vacant lot and build the temporary houses. They should be staying in some cheap inn for explorers until the tenement houses are built.

In addition, 18 of the 23 slaves with master have come back. The masters of the slaves who have been saved from the labyrinth have the right to them, but they need to pay remuneration for the explorers who have saved the slaves in the labyrinth that's equal to buying the slaves anew. The masters of the 18 people who had come back didn't want to pay that remuneration. They're presently registered under Porina as their master.

I'm planning to let the slaves who have come back and the unreleased slaves to either work in the tenement houses as apprentices, or become explorers of the labyrinth. I intend to ask them to decide their choice themselves.

In the future, it's just a coincidence that I, as Satou, am going to use the vacant land nearby the production tenement houses for the explorer training.

◇

In order to get the Wood Plate needed to enter the labyrinth, I go to the west guild.

"I'd like to register in the guild. The normal registration one."
"Y, yes. I'm very sorry, but would you take off that mask? And also please tell me your name."
"Ah, sorry. The name is Kuro."

I take out the black mask which covered my eyes.
I change my voice to be rough with ventriloquism skill. I imagine it to be like the voice of Togawa Mikaru, a voice actor.

"This is the Wood Plate--"
"The explanation is unnecessary."

I interrupted the female staff who was going to explain in accordance to the manual, took the wood plate with one hand, and then left the guild.

Since the carriage that links the east and west guild has come, I ride it behind boys who look to be beginner explorers. One of the boy seems to find my equipments unusual as he frequently looks back, but the other one rebukes him. Three veteran-like middle aged explorers get into the carriage, making it full, so it departs.

"Yo, brother, that weapon is a gun isn't it?"
"You know well. Yes, it's an old muzzle-loading gun called Musket."
"As I thought huh. I've seen it in my local governor's mansion."

Guns aren't a new weapon in Shiga kingdom, it's more like an old obsolete tool from several hundreds years ago. The reason seems to be because its accuracy is low, and it's hard to obtain the sulfur. There were also magic tool guns like the magic pistol I have, but since the military magic tools called Flame Wand and Lightning Wand are more popular, it has also become obsolete.

"Are you alright using such an antique like that?"
"It's alright, no problem."

I'm not lying. The middle-aged explorers didn't pry more than that, maybe because there are a lot of explorer's kinds. The boy who has been glancing behind since a while ago is slightly unpleasant. Just say it if you have something to say.

"Can I help you?"
"Hey hey, if you're alone, why don't you enter the labyrinth with us? We've just registered today too."

What, they're looking for a companion huh.

"Sorry. I already have an appointment in front of the labyrinth."
"I see, that's unfortunate."
"That's why I said not to do it."

I don't mind going with you guys if I don't have a business, but I can't do it now since I need to transport the lost thieves.

"Oy oy, isn't it quite lively in front of the labyrinth today?"
"Ah, there are so many young girls gathered, maybe some Red Iron guys have come back from the middle part of the labyrinth? With so many girls like that, they're probably waiting for the [Crimson Young Noble]."
"I'd like some~"

I thought that there were few high level explorers, so they're assaulting the middle part of the labyrinth huh. One of the girl notices me, and then tells her friends.

"Kuro-sama!"
"We've been waiting for you Kuro-sama."

The boys who are riding the carriage with me acting strangely while saying, "Eh? Kuro-sama? Eh?" Come to think of it, the boy who can't calm down is called [Kerou]. It sounds a bit similar.

It goes without saying that the girls who are calling me are the freed explorers. The carriage can't move due to the surrounding people, so I get down halfway through, and take everyone along to the labyrinth.

"Kuro-sama, there are 47 people in all. We've done all the preparations."

The commander-san who's hanging the ant wing silver sword stands beside me. 47 people, it's like Ako vendetta. We move to the teleport point that has been prepared beforehand, and then I leave the girls behind and teleport to where the lost thieves are to transport them.

◇

"Hyahha! You guys, we can win if we all go at him!"
"""HOOOOO!"""

The lost thieves have been decreased by 10 people. There seem to be a dispute for boss. Having bloodbath is too much no matter how you look at it. I created several prisons with no hesitation.

Since I've taken their weapons away, they come attacking me with weapons made from stones and some kind of bones, and also by throwing stones with slingshot-like thing.

Why can't you guys put those idea and effort for something proper.

I eliminate the stones which come flying with surprising accuracy altogether with the lost thieves by using three blazes of [Remote Stun]. They shouldn't be able to get up since every one of them was hit by three orbs. With this, it'd be nice if the second group become quiet without causing trouble when I'm taking them.

I wrap the two former bosses of lost thieves who have killed their own friends together with the 10 corpses that they've killed by using cloth handed by the lost thieves who attacked me just now.

I tie the fainted lost thieves in 10 people group, and teleport them to the first area where the female explorers are waiting. I entrust the female explorers to wake the lost thieves and take them to the authority. It seems they're being somewhat rough with the lost thieves when they're waking them up, but when I consider their circumstance, I decide to look the other way as long as they don't kill them.

While restoring my magic power with magic swords, I continued to shuttle 262 lost thieves, including the corpses. I leave the 38 people who haven't committed felony like murder in the temporary prison. They would be treated like the other lost thieves if they go now.

I'll take them along when I'm handing Sir Sokel to the kingdom later.

Part 38 - The Man in Black Clothes (3)

Satou's here. Fake name has the impression of something that phantom thieves or swindlers, those kind of criminals, have. It might be because there won't be any opportunity to use a false name if you live honestly. Even though Pen-name and Handle-name are kinds of false name too, the impression you get from them is greatly different isn't it.

◇

"Kuro-sama, we have taken all 262 lost thieves to the explorer guild. The guildmaster is calling for you."
"Is that so, I'll go immediately."

While nodding to commander-san's report, I advance through the passageway of death toward the labyrinth city. Commander-san is a 27 years old woman called Sumina. She's an intense carnivore woman with red lion hair, thick eyebrows, and thick lips. I can't call her beautiful, but she's someone with a mysterious charm.

Together with her, I go to the guildmaster room in the west guild. The guildmaster instructed commander-san to get out of the room as soon as she saw my face.

"As I thought, it's you huh."
"Fuhn, to think that the pyromaniac old woman is the guildmaster. Think more carefully about the place when you use magic."
"Mind your own business."

I talk to the guildmaster as Kuro with haughty attitude.

"You broke that Sokel guy out of prison didn't you. I think I should arrest you here and now as a guildmaster myself, how about it?"
"Enough with the pointless mind game. I'm protecting that guy in a safe place. I want to interrogate him, but I'd deliver him in person if you can provide a safe place that can prevent him from killers or poisoning by his relatives."

The guildmaster is threatening my undaunted and proud attitude. Frankly speaking, the only reason why I'm sheltering Sir Sokel is because I don't want an acquaintance to die needlessly. I'll gladly let the guildmaster takes him if she wants to bear the responsibility.

"Who's behind you?"
"My master is the sword of heaven."
"Hou, didn't think you would answer. To think that the royal family is behind you."

No, I wanted to say that I was Nanashi's subordinate, but it seemed she misunderstood.

"So, have you suppressed all the fiend drug cultivation fields?"
"Yeah, I didn't burn them since I'd like to lure those guys out, but I had released all the people who worked there."

"You really are the person who saved all those people huh. Doesn't seem like there's anyone with Alchemy or Compounding skill though?"
"There is no one with Alchemy skill. I've put the people with Compounding skill in a proper place."

The guildmaster looks satisfied with my answer. I can imagine that she's misunderstanding it, but I don't intend to correct it.

"And, are you going to stay in the labyrinth city for a while?"
"No I originally came here by the request of an acquaintance to take care of someone from his clan who had become a lost thief. I'm going to be in the royal capital for the time being, although I intend to come here again in near future."
"That so. I'd like to give you a medal in my capacity as the labyrinth resource minister."
"Unnecessary."

I tell so, and get out of the guildmaster's room. I tell the commander-san who looks worried outside that it's fine, and head to the guild treasury to receive the prize money. It's nearly 400 gold coins. It's about as much as two Rudaman's worth.

I give commander-san and the other explorers one gold coin each. Then I handed over the rest to Porina whom I had tasked to buy the vacant site and asked her to pay the settlement.

◇

"Tifaliza, add me new names."
"Yes, what kind of name would you like to have?"

I ask the girl with the unreadable tranquil gaze to add some famous names from the earth onto me.

"Master, even if I add you several names, all of them besides the last one are going to be useless, is it fine with you?"
"Ah, I don't mind."

I nod, and then she chants the naming spell in calm quite voice.

"■■ Name Order.『Trismegistus』."

I've forgotten about the details, but Trismegistus should be the name of a famous alchemist.
Tifaliza who has finished the naming tilts her head while looking puzzled.

"Master, I'm sorry. The naming just now might have failed."

She tells it without looking troubled, to check her words, I open the menu. The Companion column stays at Kuro name indeed. To make sure, I select the name on Companion and Status columns to check, and the [Trismegistus] name has been properly added.

"It is the case that a name that has been given by someone powerful cannot be overwritten."

Although Tifaliza doesn't know about it, she explains the condition that makes naming fails. The name Kuro is given by the Black Dragon Heiron, so it can't be helped.

"I don't mind even if it's fail, add me another name."
"Yes, if that is what master says..."

Her word stinks a little like she's somewhat dissatisfied, but she immediately fixes her manner and mechanically continues the naming. While supplying her with [Magic Power Transfer] along the way, about 10 names had been added to me.

Now then, as for Tifaliza's and Nell's future--

"You two, do you have anything you want to do?"
"If it's allowed, I wish to know the well-beings of my parents in my hometown."

Come to think of it, their hometown was destroyed by the demon wasn't it.

"Very well, I cannot teleport to Lesseu Earldom, but I will check it."

I listen to Tifaliza's parents' names, levels and features. Looks like her parents have been turned into slaves together with her. As for Nell, she doesn't seem to have any attachment to her hometown since her relatives have been bereaved.

"You don't have anything you want to do Nell?"
"Right ssu. Please stop with the half-killing and quickly hold me ssu."

She's a carnivorous woman like Arisa huh.

"What, are you frustrated?"
"I, it's not like that ssuyo? I'm a genuine maiden ssu."
"I'll free you in two, three years, so take care of it until then."

Looks like she was anxious since she didn't know when her master would want her body.
I won't be forceful anyway. I'd just go to the brothel if I want to hold a woman, although I won't expressively say it.

"Are you going to free us? If I'm not mistaken, the two of us should worth around 30 gold coins. I have never heard anyone who releases slaves worth that much."
"I've heard story about someone releasing slaves that's over 50, 60 years old though ssu. But if I have to say, that's more like throwing them away ssu."

Is it that unusual? I think I've heard the slave trader man in Seryuu city saying the same thing.
Nell and Tifaliza don't seem like they have something particular they want to do. They said that they wanted works if they had to.

"Well, when you've found something you want to do, just say it. Until then, study magic from this book. Tifaliza, if you don't know anything, ask Nell to teach you."
"Yes, master."
"Understood ssu. Tifa-san, I'll make you to become a full-fledged spell-user ssuyo!"

Umu, good answer.

I give Nell elementary books of nature magic, water magic, earth magic, and Tifaliza an elementary book of life magic. It'd be most satisfactory if Tifaliza can learn the magic, but it's not like I'm expecting too much. Sooner or later, I'm going to take the two for power-leveling, so this is a preparation.

Now then, I leave Nell who has began her lecture at once, and teleport to the outskirt of Furusau town.

◇

From there, I fly with Flash Drive toward Lesseu Earldom.

I caught a sight of the kingdom army being kicked around by a monster that looked like a dragon.

It's a huge monster called Gaudy Mole. It has dragon-like wings, a split tail, and it wears a richly colored collar roll on its head. Since its level is 47, it seems to be quite formidable.

Is that the dragon that's blocking the highway?

I'm sorry for snatching their job, but I change into Nanashi-style with violet hair and eliminate it with Claiomh Solais from the sky. The highway blockade should be opened now.

I install several carved seal boards for teleporting along the way. I've also installed a carved seal board on the outskirt of the town in Zettsu Earldom that neighbors Lesseu Earldom. I saw an unexpected person in the town of Zettsu Earldom, but since I couldn't meet the person as Satou, I'll be waiting for the next chance. We will probably meet in the labyrinth city or the royal capital.

I arrived at Lesseu Earldom that day, but unfortunately, there weren't anyone who seemed to be Tifaliza's parents. There was no mistake about it since I had searched on the map. I also searched on the three adjacent earldoms and the two neighboring kingdoms, but the people in questions didn't exist there.

I felt slightly depressed, but since the search was over, I teleported to the labyrinth city.
I told the truth to Tifaliza, and then she went to her room after muttering "Thank you very much." I'll let her cry as much as she wants today.

I leave it to Nell to cheer Tifaliza up and went back to the mansion.

◇

"Wlcome~"

Tama finds and meets me who comes out of the basement door. Pochi also rushed here slightly later.

"Today is the festival of Lasagna and Cheese Gratin nanodesu!"

Hou, that sounds nice.
I let Pochi to dangle on my arm while supporting Tama who's climbing my body with my hand.

"Welcome back."
"Ara, welcome back. I saw it~ Master did flashy things that weren't like usual master."
"I'm back. No one will associate it with me if I do something that flashy right?"

I sit down beside Mia and Arisa who are relaxing in the living room. Before Mia could dive on to my lap, Tama quickly climbed down my neck from where she was on my shoulder, and landed on my lap. Pochi changes place with Tama, she's climbed on to my shoulder.

"Mwu."
"Reserved~?"

I've never accepted to that reservation though.

"So almost everything has been settled today?"
"Mostly yeah. I guess it's just eliminating the mastermind behind Sir Sokel and securing the way to make the slaves who've remained in the mansion of ivy to sustain themselves left?"

I wish the kingdom would do something about the former, but if they can't settle it before the Kingdom Conference, I'll intervene without reserve.

I listen to Liza's report about the children's training observation while eating the piping hot Lasagna Lulu's made in the dining room.

"Since there were many rash children, Iruna and Jenna had a hard time. They're going to live in the tent of training ground with the children from today on."
"I see, I should bring them some Brownie Wine for evening-drink."

Looks like the apprentice maids in the mansion are also being strictly trained by Ms. Miteruna. They reported happily about how they were taught letters with the learning card and magic control with magic powered spinning top by Lulu and the others during the break.

Now then, it's been awhile, let's go to the labyrinth with everyone to level up from tomorrow on.

Part 39 - Training

Satou's here. A scalpel can't dismantle a tuna no matter how sharp it is. Something with suitable length and size is needed even if it's less sharp.

◇

"Tou nanodesu!"

With her small body, Pochi charges toward a monster that's as huge as a two-story house. Pochi and the others are currently fighting the strongest monster in this area, the level 39 Mace Lizard. The figure of Pochi who's charging to the bump on the monster's head which has countless thorns on it looks like a hero.

Even though Pochi's short magic sword pierces the Mace Lizard's head to the sword's base, it doesn't looks like it has any effect. The Mace Lizard shakes its huge head, throwing Pochi away to the corner of the room.

"Having a large head means that you are wise is just an urban legend, so I inform!"
"Arisa, reinforcement magic. Mia, break open its mouth."
"Nn."
"Okkey."

The Mace Lizard who was going to pursue Pochi with a tail attack was lured by Nana's provocation and then changed its course.

Looks like the magic balls shot from Lulu's magic artillery only scrape the Mace Lizard body without dealing fatal damages. Similarly, Tama's twin magic swords also only gouge its thick skin, giving only little damages.

Mia's new magic, Balloon Shot wrenches open the Mace Lizard's mouth. This magic consumes more magic power than its original, [Balloon], but since it creates the needed water by itself, it's convenient to use. It's a spell that I've created by Mia's request recently.

"Here comes the reinforcement~"
"Thank you."

Arisa's reinforcement magic gives more power to Liza. Responding to boiling power from her body, Liza shouts out the technique name together with fighting-spirit-filled yell. The shout is unnecessary, but Liza always shouts after she receives reinforcement magic, maybe because her tension is raised.

"Flickering Spiral Spear Attack"

The red light that leaks out of the magic spear wraps Liza's whole body. Her figure runs through 10 meters in an instant with a boom sound as if it's cutting the air. The magic spear and her whole body, which becomes like one with the weapon, ran through the Mace

Lizard's body.

It's an absurd technique.

"Amazing~?"
"As expected of Liza-san."
"Affirmative. Her attack is valorous, so I said."

Pochi who has been covered in spiderwebs totteringly comes back, I clean her with life magic.

"Thank you for your hard work too Pochi."
"Master, I'd like a bigger weapon nodesu."

Unusual for her, Pochi was being selfish, or rather, demanding for once. Actually, situations where Pochi's and Tama's weapons cannot penetrate through the outer skin of enemies that are level 35 and beyond have increasingly come up. I've actually began making new weapons for the two since yesterday, but as expected, it can't be finished in one night.

I try taking out various weapons from my storage.

"Do you want to try using a normal long sword?"
"Lots~?"
"Big weapons nanodesu!"

With sparkles on her eyes, Pochi tries to wield and feel the one-handed sword, the bastard sword, the great sword, the great hammer, and the halberd I've taken out. She can pick up every weapon effortlessly, but since her own body weight is light, it doesn't seem like Pochi can deal the inertia well when she swings them no matter what.

"Master~? Put out one more~"

Since Tama asked me to take out another great hammer like she was holding, I took it out. Although the hammer is lighter compared to the mithril alloy great hammer in the dwarf hometown, it's easily heavier than Tama's weight.

"Look look~ Spinning top~?"

Tama who's holding great hammers on both her hands spins them like a spinning top. I tend to forget since Tama's physical power loses to Liza and Pochi, but it's also quite high. Arisa and Lulu mutter [Tama is koma] while having their shoulders twitching. That seem to be the vital part. I guess it can't be helped since they're at the age where they can laugh at the most trivial thing.

"Uuu, unsteady nodesu."

Looks like Pochi wants to use a long weapon like a halberd as if it's a great sword, and then she attaches a heavy weight on her body to keep the balance.

"It's not unsteady anymore, but it's heavy I can't move nodesu."

I guess the weight is too much. Even while saying that it's too heavy, Pochi moves while dragging the weight.

"Uu~n, I guess I really should finish making the type of swords that can create the blade from nature magic."

Their weapons need replacement, but there's also the problem of everyone's skill's variations which have stopped since level 20 and beyond. The rear guards are already fine as they are, but I feel that the vanguards need to add a bit more technique-type skill to their repertoires.

"Why don't we go back to the elf village to learn new techniques while waiting for the completion of the weapons?"
"Training right! It's the training arc right!"

When Arisa hears it, her eyes are shining--you don't need to deliberately use light magic to add those effects. Just how far her acting styles have expanded.

It seems the one that's positive to it isn't only Arisa. Liza and Nana who are worried about their fighting time that has been extending with every fight recently also agrees to it.

"Hitting the waterfall~?"
"Marching through the snowy mountain nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama also look eager, although the direction is a bit off.

"The elf hometown is alright, but I'd love to train at the sennin's place or the mountain where dragonkins live~"

While ignoring Arisa's nonsense, I've decided to go to the elf hometown.

◇

"You cheatttt!"

How rude.

We've got back to Boruenan forest by return teleporting five times in a row. Unlike the advanced magic Teleport, Return teleport is limited to 300 kilometers long, so we can't arrive in one go. Therefore, it's quite hard. The magic power consumption increases with the number of people, so it needs around one meteor shower worth of magic power.

Lua-san welcomed us with surprised face in the tree house on the surface Boruenan. Apparently, she had come here to check the rooms ventilations. She had already gotten used to me coming here with teleport though, she immediately greeted me back normally after I greeted her.

"Hello, Satou-san, there are a lot of people today huh."
"I'm thinking of letting everyone train, so we'll be staying here for a while."
"Yes, you're welcome anytime."

Behind me, Arisa sharply catches Lua-san's word, and says "Today?", but I ignore it. I must not react. I have to magnificently ignore it like a flowing river.

"Yes, I will call Poa and the others. Oh right, Nea said that she had succeeded extracting the vanilla."
"Yes, I've heard that one from Aze-san with Telephone yesterday."

This time Arisa and Lulu check the yesterday's schedule. Un, your memories are correct. We certainly fought monsters in the labyrinth in succession for the whole day, and I was making magic tools behind them during the time I'm free. I developed that magic tool in order to contact the slaves in the distant land. Since they don't have any way to communicate if an emergency happens.

"STOP! Jasuto a Momento."

Why in English.

"What?"
"Question #1, why was it『Today』?"
"Ara, Satou-san came here almost every other day you know."

Lua-san revealed it without even giving me the chance to explain somehow. Even though I had only come back 7-8 times since we went to the labyrinth city.

"Since when..."
"Mwu."

Lulu and Mia look at me with upturned eyes like criticizing me.

"Whenever I found some delicious ingredients, or unusual dishes, I came back here to share them."

This is the truth. Like with Gebo, or Yellow Lizard meat, or Basilisk smoked meat, I came back to bring them. I also came to Nea-san's place when she wanted to consult about the way to extract vanilla. By no means those were just because I wanted to meet Aze-san.

"Hohou? And by Telephone?"
"Huh? Haven't I said it? My telephone and Aze-san's Infinite Telephone (World Phone) can have a conversation between the labyrinth city and Boruenan Forest."

Never heard of it, Arisa and others pressed on me.
I mean, there would be [Guilty] barrage if I said it right?

Looks like Lua-san perceives the awkward atmosphere, she changes the story.

"Oh right, there are the bean from the spriggans in the refrigerated warehouse, please check it okay. "
"They've already delivered it huh, I'll check it, thank you very much."
"By beans, don't tell me!?"

Fu, fu, fu. I had asked the spriggans who were good at exploring to search every corners of Boruenan forest.

"Let's enjoy it later. I'm going to serve it for the dinner today, so don't overeat okay."
"That has come at last!　Ah, would the dinner come faster. Hey, do you have something like an incense that can cheat time?"
"None."

I understand that you can't wait for it, but I don't think that's an item that warrants the need to hasten time.

◇

I was going back to the mansion of ivy to develop the new equipments for Pochi and the others while leaving everyone in Boruenan forest, but Mia told me to wait.

"Level gap, close."
"Um~m?　You want to go to the labyrinth since you want to close the level gap between you, and Arisa and the others, is it?"
"Nn."

Presently, everyone besides Mia is level 35, Mia is level 27. According to Arisa, it seems that elves need twice as much experience points compared to humans and beastkins.

"Understood, then let's raise it quickly."
"Nn."

I go to the labyrinth city with Mia. I felt like I heard Arisa said, "Quickly he said", just before teleporting, I decided that I had just misheard it.

Part 40 - Training (2)

Satou's here. There is no level cap in this world, but there are a lot of people who misinterpret that there's a growth limit since the experience point needed for the next level jumps up exponentially.

◇

We're not going to the usual Area 74, but Area 69 where the cockatrices are, its neighboring Area 109, the insect paradise, and Area 104 which is the den of aquatic monsters.

First we go to Area 69. Come to think of it, I wonder what happens to the [Fangs of Conflagration] members that were gone to hunt some cockatrices?

I've finished carrying Mia with princess carry almost without engaging any battle from Area 74 to Area 69. I thought of letting her down, but it seemed she was quite frightened with my moving speed, her hands wouldn't let go of me.

"F, fast you know? It's too fast see. Excessive speed is the cause of accidents, it's dangerous you know?"

Mia raises her index finger while being talkative like when she's drunk and approaches me. She must have been quite frightened. She forgave me while saying "Forgiven" like she usually was when I sincerely apologized.

"Stone statue."
"Ah, judging from its appearance, it's probably an explorer."

A pony-sized chicken-like being is pecking the stone statue. According to the AR it's a Cockatrice Puppy. Probably the child of cockatrices. Its level is only around 20.

It seems the cockatrices feed on their petrified prey, as a lot of them are gathering on trees and monsters that have been turned into stones. In this hall, there are level 10-20 cockatrice puppies, level 25-35 adult cockatrices, and a pair of giant upper level 50 cockatrices.

Before I begin leveling Mia up, I rout the cockatrice puppy with Stun magic, and collect the stone statue.

"Mia, do you have a spell that affects a wide area?"
"Nn, Storm."

I hand Mia a world tree wand, and then she begins to chant. This wand has the best performance to expand the area of effect. Mia's spirit magic fills the hall, damaging the cockatrices. Just one magic has decreased Mia's MP by 30%.

The majority of the cockatrice puppies are exterminated by Mia's magic, while the rest are dying. I use Flexible Swords to cut cockatrices' necks and put them into my storage. Since

cockatrices are soft, even the fragile Flexible Swords can cut them easily. I saw flea-like creatures flying when the cockatrices were being stowed.

A giant Cockatrice King and a Cockatrice Queen are coming with reverberating footsteps.

"Satou."
"Ah, I'll eliminate them immediately."

I cut the necks of the cockatrices couple who were burning with anger due to the massacre of their family, and put them into the storage. Since kitten-sized fleas are scattered around when I've put the pair into my storage, I exterminate them with Flame Storm. When the flame reached the ceiling, an explosion occurred.

What?
I immediately protect Mia in my mantle, and evacuate to the entrance.

"Mwu, hot."
"Ah, sorry. I had limited the power, but it seemed that there were flammable gas collected in the ceiling."

I wonder if it's some kind of trap too?
There was a tar pond-like place in the corner of the room. The surface of that pond is bubbling, the gas probably escapes to the ceiling from there.

There were some huge eggs of cockatrices in the room, but they had been broken from the explosion earlier.

◇

A treasure chest appears on the place where the giant cockatrices were defeated.

I've heard that treasure chests may rarely appear on the place where monsters are defeated in the labyrinth, but this is the first time I see the real thing. The one in the demon labyrinth was a mimic after all.

Since the treasure chest was set with petrification trap, I had Mia to evacuate and then removed the trap. I noticed that I should have opened it with [Magic Hand] from afar after I had canceled it, the realization came too late.

Inside of the chest, there are money and jewels, and also various magic items. There's only one weapon, a short sword, but it's made of silver and can be used to invoke magic, quite good. There are 8-9 gold coins worth of metal. As for the magic items, they're an Insect Repellent Bell and three Ignition Rods. Since they look worn-out, they must be mementos of explorers who have lost their life in the labyrinth.
Among the jewels, there are magic catalysts mixed in, some small fire stones, and lightning stones. Although this is the first time I've seen it, their names often comes up in magic tool recipes. They're materials used to make magic tools for military uses called Fire Wand and Lightning Wand.

I hand the short sword to Mia, and put the rest into the storage.

Afterwards, we thoroughly eliminate four of the five rooms with cockatrices, and Mia's level rose by 4. Arisa would probably be mad if I said that it took 30 minutes.

There are numerous individuals that were relatively stronger among the cockatrices, on top of that we got chain bonus for eliminating the cockatrices all at once. I've heard about this game-like exp-increasing bonus from Koshin-shi when I was drinking with the explorers. It's said that if you beat a lot of monsters in short amount of time, the power that becomes level up from the monsters--probably experience points--that you've defeated will be absorbed by you concentratedly, the efficiency is better.

Now then, putting that aside, since Mia's body looked sluggish from the sudden level up, I installed a carved seal board so we could go back here, and then we went back to the villa. I let her sleep on the bed after she ate some sweet things and drank water, then I decided to continue developing equipments for Pochi and the others.

I'm not planning to make something too original. I want to make a short sword with a mechanism that can make its blade extends with magic blade. I can probably make it by modifying the current [Shell] circuit a bit.

Come to think of it, making a whip sword like the Carrion Sword or Galean Sword which Arisa's mentioned back then might be good too. I'd be worried about the strength if it was a real sword, but since the blade is made from magic power, it looks feasible, let's try to make it.

I continue to develop the designs for not only Pochi's sword but also Tama's and the others' new equipments until Mia wakes up. I've hit some difficulty while developing new magic for Lulu, but it looks like I can raise the cannonball firing rate if I use magic barrel.

◇

After thoroughly exterminating monsters in Area 109 and Area 104 until the time for dinner, Mia has leveled up to 37. The plan was to level her to 40, but exp from aquatic monsters were bad, her level couldn't quite get up.

During the third break, I searched the corridor that extended from the deep of Area 104 to the middle layer. It looks like you can descend to the middle layer from Area 66 and Area 104 besides from the entrance in Area 1. The middle layer that can be accessed from these three entrances doesn't seem to be connected, so I would have to get down there from Area 66. The middle layer that can be accessed from Area 1 has three groups of explorers with levels around 30-47 inside. Two of the groups have around 10 people each, while the last group has around 70 people.
The monsters in the middle layer have 10 more levels on average compared to the upper layer, but their numbers are less than half of the upper layer's monsters. The monsters in the middle layer accessed from Area 1 are quite few in particular. Unlike the upper layer, a lot of monsters of middle layer can use magic. Among them, monsters that can use Instant Death-

type magic exist nearly in every Area. It will be dangerous if I don't cull the monsters with Instant Death attacks when we go to the middle layer for leveling everyone.

Once our objective has been met to some extent, we go back to the villa. Of course I've already put a carved seal board in a small room in the middle layer for the time we need it.

"Satou."
"Oh, you've woken up huh. It's about time to prepare for dinner, so let's go back to Boruenan Forest."

Since everyone is waiting.

"Mwu."
"Arisa and the others are going to continue training for at least 3-4 days, so we can just continue tomorrow."

I take Mia who's puffing her cheeks along, and consecutively teleport to Boruenan Forest.

"I'm back."
"W, welcome back!"
"I'm back, and also welcome Aze-san."
"Nn, Aze."

There are Arisa and Aze-san in the tree house's living room. Looking at the opened magic book before Arisa's face, Aze-san probably answered whenever she had questions.

"Looks like you're working hard."
"Uh~huhhhhhhh?! Hey wait Mia, what did you do."

Raising her levels of course.

"Ara? You've really worked hard Mia."
"Nn."

Aze-san who doesn't know Mia's level half a day ago is reacting normally, but Arisa who knows that she has leveled up by 10 in half a day screams with surprised look. She's slightly noisy.

"We eradicated the cockatrices, and the scorpion area deeper on, and then also the aquatic monster area nearby it. I can only use the scorpions to make body nourishment potion, but the cocka and the fish look quite delicious you know."
"Kuh, to be that cheat when you seriously do power-leveling!"

Level does increase with this method, but you won't master the way to fight. Mia is participating in the actual battles with Arisa and the others anyway, so this much level adjustment should be alright.

◇

"Eh? Coffee?"

When I present her the coffee cup, Arisa receives it while looking surprised. I take another cup from the storage, and hand it to Aze-san. I feel slightly mischievous, I didn't take out the sugar jar and the milk pitcher.

"That's right. Here you go for Aze-san too."
"Hee, it smells nice. The color is darker than a tea, is it good?"
"Yes, I've always drank it during the job."

Since the cup is hot, Aze-san slides her sleeves on her palm to lift the cup. It's the technique to cope with a cup without handle. Aze-san draws her face close to the steam that rises from the cup, and enjoys the fragrance. Ah, I want to become the cup. To prevent burn, she blows the cup, but she overdoes it, and then she's swooning.

This person is cute like always.

"Uu, it's too bitter I can't drink it."
"What a child. This bitterness is the real pleasure of coffee."

After enjoying the teary Aze-san plentiful enough, I take out an easy-to-drink diluted coffee that has been put with a lot of sugar and milk. I didn't take out the tea-cake since it was before dinner, but since the new coffee suited her taste, she happily drank it while saying, "I can drink this one."

"T, this is the girl power of 530.000 huh.... Aze, what a fearful child."

Arisa is Arisa, I don't know what she's saying.

I took out chocolate parfaits after the meal, but one of it was unpopular for some reason. I have properly put corn flakes in the bottom, vanilla ice on top of it, and then a lot of fresh cream and chocolate sauce on it, furthermore I've even put chocolate bars and banana cuts.

"Kuh, I can't eat it even though it's my dream choco parfait. So this is the Komei's trap!"

I've made the character of Komei on it. Unfortunately, Arisa didn't seem to notice it, she didn't have any reaction.

"Delishlish~?
"Bitterdelish."
"It's a bit bitter, sweet, and cold below, but it's the strongest even though it's cold nanodesu!"

Calm down Pochi.

Nana and Liza also gave their impressions, but it was just "Sweet." After giving their short impressions, Tama and Mia eat it with great delight. Lulu has already eaten it during the trial-run, so she doesn't have any impression now.

Only Arisa who has eaten too much during the dinner groans in front of the choco parfait. Even though I had warned her that there would be a dessert before the dinner began so don't eat too much, she fully went round the meat dish, the fish dish, and the vegetable dish. Still, I feel sorry for Arisa who has given up with teary eyes after one bite, I'll make another for her tomorrow morning so I guess I'll leave the leftover parfait to the pixies who are peeking here like an eagle.

I bite the tea-cake while drinking coffee. The slightly bitter taste of the chocolate powder is spreading in my mouth. It's like the failed handmade chocolate that can only be seen during valentine. I have to improve it more after all.

While wrapped in the sweet fragrance of vanilla, and the lovely fragrance of the chocolate, the night of Boruenan grew late.

Part 41 - Magic Metals

Satou's here. Even a difficult job can become unexpectedly easy if you split it into smaller parts. Even the difficulty of a large-scale program can rapidly decrease when it's cleverly split. Although, the hard part is cleverly splitting that into smaller bits isn't it.

◇

"Whip~"
"Whipywhip nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama are playing with the newly made whip swords in whip mode. The magic blades are divided by around five centimeters each, and it can go up to five meters long. Since they're trial products for the practice this time, I've modified the magic circuits to prevent injuries from using them.

Pochi who's unable to manage the whip sword finally finds her body wrapped in it. I won't go as far as saying that it's as expected, but it's really like Pochi.

"H, help! Nanodesu."
"Hoitt."

She was struggling for a while, but then she gave up and asked for help. I touch the whip sword and pull out the magic power. Pochi is immediately set free of the binding.

"Thank you nanodesu!"

Pochi stretches her body while saying "U~n."

"Pochi~, like this!"

Tama manipulates two whip swords, entangle them on a tree's branch, and climbs up the tree, and then from the top of the tree, she entwines a wooden bucket on the ground and pulls it up. Geez, she's like a certain explorer from somewhere.

I'll leave those swords for Tama and then give Pochi her true new equipment.

"Pochi might be more suited with this one."
"Amazing nodesu! It's big nodesu!"

From the short sword that Pochi holds, a nearly-three meters long blade appears. It's the same kind of magic as Magick Blade. It can cut well yet fragile. In addition, since it's weightless, it can't cut like a great sword. Someday I'll construct an inertia control circuit on it to make it able to cut like a great sword.

I've not only made whip swords for the play. I also made various romance weapons like a lance with drill mechanism, rocket-punch like gauntlets, or a pile-bunker which is a shield

with a pile-driver machine. Arisa was being continuously frolic about it, but everyone was puzzled when it was the time to use them in actual practice. Well, I guess that's how it is. Simple is the best.
I present the drill blueprint with strengthened torque to Doa and Kiya couple. It probably won't be too far off before their Golem Tank is equipped with a drill.
As for the other ones like the pile-bunker, since Shagnig the leprechaun asked only the pile-driver part, I turned it into a normal pile-driver and presented it to him.

I'll make a Death Scythe and a katana with reversed blade next time.

◇

"Nevertheless, Satou-san really likes mithril don't you."
"Rather than like, it's because mithril is the only metal I have that's suited for magic swords."

Lua-san who was watching the new equipments of Pochi and the others asked while wondering. I can't use iron and lead since they diffuse magic power, while even though brass, copper, and silver can transmit magic power well, the good ones are too soft to be used for weapons. Bronze is hard, but it can't transmit magic power as well as copper and silver. In the end, mithril is the only usable one from the process of elimination. Gold transmits magic power as good as mithril, but it's even softer than copper and silver, and the cost is too high.

"Ara? If it's the convenient Divine Metal (Orihalcon), you can make both weapons or armors from it you know?"
"Right. For sturdiness and heat-resistance, there's Hihiirogane, and for weapons, I recommend True Iron (Adamantite) since it's harder than Diamond although it's quite heavy. There's also the Magic Silver (True Silver) if you need to make magic tools."

I wonder what's with this "If there's no bread, let them eat cake" atmosphere.
The things that Aze-san and Lua-san casually brought up are the so-called legendary metals. I've only ever seen Hihiirogane as the blast furnace that's used for refining mithril in the dwarf hometown.

"I will be receiving some Orihalcon from the Saga Empire's hero, but I have no way of obtaining the other metals."
"You can just make it with alchemy."

W, what?!
I grasped both hands of Aze-san who casually said it and asked futher.

"You can make them with alchemy?"
"Yes, i-it's simple you know? Orihalcon is made from copper, brass and also the philosopher's stone--"

Waitaminute. Philosopher's stone, that's.

"Aze-san, I can't exactly use the philosopher's stones unreservedly."

"Didn't we give you severals the other day."

I've already used them. I've used them for living armors and spare circuits of airships. I guess I'll take it from the airships if I need it since taking it from living armor will reset the experience.

"Then I'll give you another one."
"Is it alright? To give those so readily."
"I-it's fine."

No wait, even if you cutely sulk like that.

"If Aze-sama says so, I think it's really fine. Moreover, thanks to Satou-san's deed, we have acquired 1000 philosopher's stones from other clans."
"Ah, I forgot. When I said that Satou wished for philosopher's stones during the high elf assembly, they shared some."
"They gave it since I said I wanted it?"
"Normally they wouldn't. Although it doesn't seem like you notice it yourself, you've done that much you know."

I bulldozed through it with magic in the end though, I feel quite embarrassed when they praise my own work like this.
Or rather, why do other clans have so much of those?

"A long time ago, Ifurueze people got addicted to the plaything of Furu Empire."

That plaything seemed to be an expensive magic tool, and they paid it with philosopher's stones as the compensation. Not the courtesan beautiful women, but courtesan games huh.
It seemed they paid with several philosopher's stones at a time, but most of their philosopher's stones which had been stocked for several decades were embezzled. It seems there are various high elves huh. I'll ask them to show me that plaything later. I'm very interested in it as a game developer myself.

"Although those philosopher's stones were recovered in a thousand years time, we lost a lot during the war with the demon lord which cost us a light ship. Afterward, we used the extra philosopher's stones to repair the broken light ships, so we didn't have any saving."

I see.
However, Furu Empire huh. I feel like I've heard the name somewhere, turn out it's the country which was using the money I got in large quantity from the dragon valley. Come to think of it, there were some unusual money too. I take one out and show it to the two as a material for our talk.

"Sa, Satou-san, that coin is?"
"Yes, it's a thing called Crimson Treasure of Furu Empire that I had acquired before."
"Ara, how unusual."

I hand the Crimson Treasure to Lua-san while saying "It's a beautiful money isn't it?" The

long-lived Aze-san appeared to know about it.
Lua-san holds the Crimson Treasure over the light and checks it from various angles. Lua-san let out a bombshell before I could say "Please take it with you if you like."

"This is a philosopher's stone isn't it?"
"That's right."

Eh?!
Aze-san plainly answered Lua-san's question.

"It's not the philosopher's stone itself, as it seems to have been processed a bit, but if you're using it as catalyst, maybe it's easier to use it just like that I think? If you want to turn it back into a philosopher's stone, it should be possible by asking elders and wait a decade."

A decade huh, that's really like a time span of long-lived elves.

"By any chance, magic tools can be made by using this money?"
"Yes, originally philosopher's stone should be processed first in order to reinforce its magic power when it's used as catalyst for making magic metals. I'll teach you later if you want to know about it. I don't remember it now, but it should be in the memory deposit of the world tree."

I decided to accept her kind offer. I accompany Aze-san to the world tree, and learn the way to use the Crimson Treasure and to make magic metals. The Aze-san inside the memory deposit is divinely beautiful like a demi-god that Leriril said back then, and she's showing intelligence beyond human understanding. But well, if this was how Aze-san was during our first meeting, I probably would not fall for her even though I surely would think she was beautiful. Aze-san is someone who does "Awawa" after all.
As a compensation, or not, I gave around 1000 Crimson Treasures for the elf hometown since it looked like it would be useful for them. I feel slightly proud since I was able to see the surprised looks on the elders who hardly showed their expressions.

◇

First I made an anvil and a hammer made of adamantite. Next, I used those to forge orihalcon sword. The catalyst was used during this forging process, but since I had been inside Aze-san's memory, I was able to successfully make the sword from the get go.
Even though I wasn't too fired up, I ended up making a sword that was several level above the fairy sword in sharpness and endurance. The difference is this great just because I used different material and tools huh.
I'll make another set of this anvil and hammer and then give it to Elder Dohar next time. He will surely be pleased. Of course together with all sorts of magic metals too.

I bring the experimental swords and intrude upon Arisa and Mia's training.

"Uwah, that's some gaudy sword."
"Gold."
"That's a pretty sword."

"I made these, what do you think?"

I show the sword and also some accessories made from orihalcon to the three. There are around 10 kinds of accessories including necklaces with thin chain, earrings, hair ornaments, and rings. I've also made earrings that cover the ears which seem to be popular among the elves.

"Earrings."
"Ah, Mia is unfair. I want that too."
"No."
"Uu, you're mean."

Unlike the two who's fighting over it like little children, Arisa puts a ring on her finger ecstatically. Seems that it's too big for her ring finger, it looks a bit inappropriate put on her index finger. I made that with Aze-san's finger as the assumption, but looks like it's a bit too big. I guess that size barely fits Lulu's ring finger.
After promising Aze-san to make her earrings later, I go back to my original objective.

I put the orihalcon sword I've just made in the sword-shaped mold on the pedestal. I pour Blue Liquid on the same-shaped pedestal beside it.

Since the preparation is complete, I ask Mia to cast an original water magic [Circuit Formation: Type 021]. This magic guides the poured blue liquid on the pedestal to form the type 21 magic circuit. In exchange for the fact that it can't be changed, the specialized magic can manipulate the blue liquid in micron precision, and form a very precise magic circuit.

"Arisa, please."
"Okkey."

Arisa also invokes an original space magic of the same type [Circuit Transfer: Type 021] chantlessly. Just like the name implies, this magic transfers the magic circuit that has been completed by Mia earlier to the orihalcon sword. Just like Mia's spell, it only has the function to transfer a magic circuit with fixed shape into the placed sword. They're magic which I have exclusively developed for the making of this magic sword.

Your brain needs to manipulate the image in micron meter if the magic is of general purpose, so it's not really feasible. In fact, Trazayuya couldn't come up with the solution for this problem when he was developing magic swords, he failed.
So, I thought of it in programmer-like approach. If it's difficult to make it general purpose, then it shouldn't be one. When I thought so, the two magics earlier were the result. In exchange for the limited function and condition to use it, it isn't influenced by the magician's ability. It might be what you call the shift from the world of craftsmen, to industrial.

I fill the completed sword with magic power.
The magic power smoothly spreads on the complex magic circuit. The magic circuit is activated, and then the registered magic is invoked.
Umu, it's a success.

"Uwah, it's a blue rose."
"Pretty."
"Yes, it's really pretty."

Looks like it's popular. When you fill this sword with magic power, thorns and small rose petals appear around the sword. The rose and the thorn can't be touched since they're just illusions, but they have an effect of making the opponent that are cut with them to be paralyzed or fainted. Moreover, if you recite the password, around a 10 meters long thorn will extend and bind the opponent. This technique art seems to be an ancient magic of the elves called [Sleeping Thorn]. The opponent that's binded with it will feel the thorns, and fall asleep after having been paralyzed. Yet, the rose and the petals are merely decorations, so they don't have any particular effect.

I presented this sword to Pochi's teacher, Miss Portomea. Aze-san couldn't use swords, and besides me, everyone else used short swords, a great sword, and a spear, no one used one-handed swords, so by first come first served, it became her.
Since she flaunted it too much, I ended up making a lot of magic swords with the same construction during our stay in Boruenan forest. It would be hard to make them all by forging, so I asked them the leniency for the swords to be made of bronze and of casted magic swords. This casted magic sword is a short sword size and makes red roses appear when you fill it with magic power.
For my companion use, I made the swords in short sword size and forged them from Orihalcon. There were also Arisa's dagger and Lulu's kitchen knife mixed among them for some reason.

The sashimis made with the orihalcon kitchen knife were delicious.

Part 42 - Mithril Plate

Satou's here. Often times I can't get my hand on something no matter how hard I endeavor. I can't reach it even though I see other people getting it so easily. Is it precisely because of that frustrating feeling that it's shining when the effort bears fruit?

This is about rare drops in net games though.

◇

Two weeks have elapsed since we got back from Boruenan forest, leveling up everyone and the labyrinth city project are going well.

"It's wider than I thought."
"Ah, it's because I got it from the lands that had been secured by purveyors."

Today I'm with Arisa inspecting the planned site where the private orphanage and the explorer training school will be build. It's about as big as an average primary school, quite big inside the city. Thanks to the Marchioness's middleman, I got them as goods, but I had to give her all kinds of accessories of the same value as the reward.
Since it was almost the time for the kingdom conference, I made some shiny gaudy accessories for the Marquis and his wife, but despite using normal precious metal and jewels, the accessories had became something that my Estimation (Market Price) skill couldn't judge. I can't help but feel that selling accessories to the nobles will be more profitable than secluding ourselves in the labyrinth. I told the Marchioness that I got them from some foreign merchants when I was visiting the trade city. I've put some some suitable name on the maker column. I honestly don't remember if it was Michaelangelo or Da Vinci.

"Next we just need a manager for the teachers huh."
"Right, I'd like a leader for the organization and an accountant, but they're hard to find."

Actually, I had interviewed Miteruna's family members, and some nobles whom the Marchioness introduced, but there weren't anyone well suited to become the leader or the accountant, although it would be different if I was hiring them as teachers. There were a lot of people who looked capable as a leader, but every one of them was either the type who despised orphans and commoners, or someone who only saw the orphanage and the school as a stepping stone to rise their position higher, so I didn't employ them.
That said, since it would embarrasses the ones who introduced them if I didn't employ anyone, I selected three reasonably less objectionable people, and dispatched them to the royal capital academy under the pretext of training. It looked like I was just getting rid of nuisances, but since I gave each
one of them 10 gold coins for two months stay and food expense, they didn't have any complaint.

"Looks like there are a lot of people who employ a slave to work as the accountant to prevent embezzlement you know?"

"It can't be helped, I'll look for one in the neighboring cities."

Since Tifaliza doesn't have Arithmetic skill, entrusting her to be an accountant is probably impossible. It seems Arisa and I have to split the work for a while.

The orphanage building is still under construction, but we have already started the admission. I had planned to start the admission after the building was completed, but since Pochi picked up some dying children in the back alley, I decided to start the management little by little.
Since there's no building, we had set up temporary tents on the place planned to become the athletic ground of the school, and added temporary sheets as beds by bundling hay bought from the farms. I don't know if Arisa's heartstring was touched by the hay beds, but she was frolic and slept together with the children on the straw beds on the first day. The next morning, she requested some strange dishes that were goat milk, and bread dipped in melted cheese. Since this is Arisa, she must be reproducing scenes from some anime or manga, no doubt about it.

I don't know where they come from but in just several days, more than 100 children have come to live in the orphanage. No one is complaining even though the meals are simple besides the ones in the first day. Mysteriously enough, there aren't any child who's being picky or leaves leftovers.

I was going to employ our maids as the regular staffs of the orphanage, but as expected, they wouldn't be enough with this many children.
By Ms. Miteruna's suggestion, I decided to employ the wives around the neighborhood as part-timers to make up for the shortage. They are women with ages ranging from 20 to 50 years old. I also have them participate in the food distribution for the poor.

Lulu investigated the reason why so many children had gathered here by using the employees' network. Since the information charge was only ant honey cookies, it was cheap. As expected of Lulu.

Now then, the reason is simple. They are children that have overflowed from other orphanages.

Originally, there were three privately and government managed orphanages in the labyrinth city. However, since this was a city with a lot of casualties, there were also a lot of orphans, so every orphanage was over capacity. The two government managed orphanages were still fine, but the privately managed one couldn't even give enough food, let alone beds.

Since the state was as such, my late-start orphanage was wholeheartedly approved. I feel that they've pushed problem children and ones who have bad physical growth on us, but it's not a problem. The mischievous kids were THUMP-ed by Arisa and Tama from the start, they're helping the adult managers now.

It seems that, up until now the overflowed children had been picked by criminal guilds of the slums, they were on the tragic course of being sold to the slave trader. And so, Kuro

eliminates those kind of slum criminal guild with a villain group in the core. I left some relatively less objectionable people since other new villains from other cities would just come if I thoroughly rooted them.

As an extra, I've also finished some miscellaneous matters during this time.
I brought the lost thieves that I had left in the labyrinth prison to the authorities, and delivered the corpses of the explorers that had been turned into stones I had collected from the Cockatrice area to their bereaved families through the explorer guild.
I wasn't present since I didn't want to see the tragic scene, but the guildmaster thanked me.
As for the rewards, after receiving them, I gave it to the church and another orphanage of the labyrinth city as Satou.

◇

"Newspaper extra?"
"Yes, I bought them since they were being sold in front of the west guild."
"What what?"

I read the newspaper extra from Ms. Miteruna whom I had asked to go to the west guild for some business. On the Pera paper written with ink is--

"Kuh, my floormaster's been huntedddddd"

--the news about the [Lion's Roar] party leads by a magic swordsman called crimson noble from before which has defeated the floormaster of the middle layer.

Arisa, I know you're vexed, but please stop grasping and shaking my shoulder.

"Arisa~?"
"What's wrong nodesu?"

Pochi who was playing outside seemed to have heard Arisa's scream, she came back inside through the window. Let's not say boorish thing like this is the second floor. That's why, Tama, please stop coming back home from the ceiling. Lulu will get mad at you for getting the floor full of dust you know?

"U, the shortest record of getting Mithrillll"
"Disappointing."
"Regrettable."

Not only Arisa, even Mia and Liza look disappointed.
Do they really want the Mithril Plate that much?

"Of course we are. I mean, that's [A Promise] and all. I want to TUEEE~"
<TUEEE: 'Look at how strong I am!", or something along that line.>
"To leave the record of master's achievement, it is something to be proud of even as a slave."

Putting aside Arisa, I understand how Liza feels.
U~n, I don't want to stand out though. Well, I guess it's fine. Everyone has gotten strong anyway, they probably can deal with anyone who bares their fangs at them. Having the upper nobles of the royal capital as enemies will be troublesome, but I can just enlist the kingdom's top people's help with Nanashi. Un, looks like it's manageable somehow.
I might be too soft, but Mithril Plate holder isn't an existence as special as Saga Empire's hero or Nanashi.

"Then, let's aim for it."
"Eh? Is it alright?"
"Is it fine with you master?"
"Fighting a powerful enemy once will be a good experience too."

I nod to Arisa who has caught both my arms and looks at me from below.
Lured by Arisa who jumps up reaching the ceiling, Pochi and Tama also jump up together.

"Yay!"
"Gaishu isshoku~"
<Outer monochrome>
"Kenkoichitekina nodesu!"
<Health drop>

I guess they mean 'with a single blow' and 'stake it all'? Tama is fine, but in Pochi's case it'd become sink or swim match, is that alright?
Pochi and Tama are too excited, they climb from both my sides, so I put them on my shoulders and support them with hands.

Now then, the problem is where the floor master is.
There wasn't any floormaster-like monster in the middle layer when I checked it three days ago. There might be some kind of procedure to make the floormaster appears.

First, I should ask someone in the knows.

◇

"What's this, are you blinded by money and fame too?"

The one who replies at me asking for the condition to POP the floor master in disgust is the pyromaniac guildmaster.

"I have enough of both. My retainers want to fight against a powerful enemy."
"Geez, you guys are the seventh party you know."

I guess it's as expected of explorers.

The information I got from the guildmaster was not much.

You can make the floormaster appear by either waiting 10 years since it's last defeated, or

summoning it by placing a magic core from a level 50 or higher monster on the altar and read aloud the [Summoning Passage].

"The upper layer one has been defeated by the [Witch of Heaven Ascension] Princess Ringrande 8 years ago. The next one will appear in two years. The magic core of level 50 or higher monster is something that's quite valuable itself. There's hardly anyone who will use it as a bait to have a fight with the [Floor Master] which you don't know whether you could win."

If lady Ringrande defeated the floormaster 8 years ago, that means she was only 14 years old back then, amazing. To accomplish such great deed without cheat. I thought that she was just a violent siscon woman, but let's revise the impression toward her.

I have around 20 magic cores of level 50 or higher monsters, so there's no problem even if I use one or two. I thought of having multiple battles with many, but it seems that you can't summon the floormaster again for one year once you summon it. I was thinking of using the defeated floormaster's magic core to summon another and fighting multiple of them, but looks like I was too naive.
It seems that a floormaster that isn't defeated will reign for one year and then go back by itself. During the floor master reign, monsters are strengthened and stimulated, which in turn increase explorers' mortality rate, so in case of failure, the holy knight of the royal capital will come to subjugate the floormaster.

"Not the labyrinth army, but the holy knights?"
"Yeah, the labyrinth army is a force that acts to purely prevent monsters overrun the surface. They can't be let to carelessly fight with the [Floor Master], exhausting them."

Is it alright to exhaust the holy knights?

◇

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for participating in our triumphal return today!"

A handsome man and seven high level explorers are standing triumphantly on the platform that's been prepared in front of the west guild. I ignored it since there wasn't anyone on the platform when I arrived at the guild, but it seems the core members of explorers who have defeated the floormaster are giving speech there.

"Now then, after the minstrels tell the story about our gallant figures in the fight, it's the long-awaited time to show the spoils that have victoriously gained from the [Floor Master]."

The labyrinth city people who have gathered in the plaza and been treated to free food and drink by the explorers in the leading role cheers in delight.

The handsome man took out a sword.

"This is the flame sword, the [Fang of Flame Snake]."

When the handsome man fills it with magic power, flame appears on the red blade, people raise frenzied cheers that are mixed with angry words. That looks like it'll give you burn if you use it long. I guess you can use it together with fireproof gloves.

In addition, they show various magic items they've acquired like a halberd that can emit fire. When a platinum tiara with egg-sized ruby was displayed, high-pitched shrieks came from the women in nobility seats, and angry voice reverberated from the bearded old man merchants when they showed Orihalcon ore and Damascus Iron ingot. I would have cheered together with them if it was half a month ago.

However, that's not it.
The item that has pulled my soul is not that.

There isn't anyone besides me who pay any attention to that item. No, only Arisa turned her face toward me and grinned at that moment.

That item's name is [Gift Orb].
There are three Gift Orbs.

First, Gift Orb [Light Magic].
Starting from the nobles, a lot of people raised their voices of envy.

Another is, Gift Orb [Posion Resistance].
It's enough to make some upper nobles to stand up from their nobility seats.

As for the last one, most people look puzzled.

『1. Really? Nothing to do with me
2. Give it to me, please!
>3. Kill and plunder』

Arisa shows some strange branching choices on her palm, made with light magic.
Well, I won't kill, but I'll use all of my available money, connections and skills to get it.

That is, Gift Orb [Chant].

It's a wonderful artifact that will present me the skill I desire most.

Part 43 - Mithril Plate (2)

Satou's here. Any organization has things like unspoken agreement or custom. After a long time, there are some cases where the particular about how it came to be is forgotten, but in most case, it never disappear.

◇

"Then, you won't hand it over no matter what?"
"Sorry. I won't comply to your demand even if you're an upper-ranking noble or the king himself. It's impossible even if you want to exchange it with the [Lost Gjallarhorn], or the world tree's branch, or an orihalcon armor."

Geryl the crimson noble told me so while looking apologetic. He probably mentioned items that are absolutely not possible to be prepared, but I would have given them except the Gjallarhorn. Even Gjallarhorn, right now I can likely make an exact copy of it.

"Give it up, this is the absolute everlasting custom that the Ancient King Yamato has established."

The guildmaster who was keeping silent during my conversation with the handsome man-shi intruded with a know-it-all look. He came out again huh, the ancient king.

"I guess it's about 600 years ago. During the time Yamato-sama alive, there was a big enough uproar among the kingdom's retainers it could have divided the kingdom due to the legendary artifact that had been dropped by the floormaster."

I see, defeating floormaster probably happens quite rare.

"Yamato-sama who couldn't stand it any longer made one rule--"

Summarizing what the guildmaster's said; first the people who defeat the floormaster have to present all the items they've acquired to the king. And then, except for one item which their representative selects, all the items are exhibited in the auction sponsored by the king to be bid equally.
Any citizen of the kingdom can participate in this auction as long as they pay the registration fee. However, since the registration fee is one gold coin per person, most people besides the wealthy and nobles don't participate. 90% of the money collected in the auction will be granted as the reward to the explorers together with the item they've picked in the beginning. The remaining 10% is collected as tax, but most of it seem to be used as the expense of the guards for the auction.

"Originally, I would have to turn you down before we have this talk and that's the end of story, but you're a promising explorer after all. I have especially asked Geryl boy to have a talk with you."
"Guildmaster, please stop calling me Geryl boy."

The guildmaster said to the harassed handsome man that he had his diaper fall even now, but I took no notice of it. Fumu, financial power means everything huh...
Oops, I have to confirm something before that. It'd be troubling if he chooses the Gift Orb as the reward after all.

"And so Geryl, what do you want as the reward?"
"The Gift Orb of course."

Geh!? Take the other two please?

"T, that is which orbs."
"The poison resistance orb."

Safe.
That's true huh. People don't normally want Chant Orb huh.

"I see, so you're aiming for the light magic orb aren't you."
"The competition for light magic is expensive. It came out 200 years ago, and it seemed to be bid at an extraordinary price of 3000 gold coins."
"That's amazing."

While being amazed, I check the number of Shiga kingdom gold coins in my storage. I can buy 1 or 2 of it with just the gold coins I have in hand. I can probably get it by just bidding honestly, but there's no meaning if there are participants who use backhanded tricks.
I'll go visit some authorized and influential people around to check whether there's a trick to it or not.

I thanked the handsome man for agreeing to meet me, and presented a liquor called [Wicked Firewater] to the guildmaster who had arranged this meeting. This is a liquor I've acquired from Ga Hou the orc, it's strong enough to make an ordinary person who drinks it to collapse with foams on their mouth. It can even make me drunk for 10 minutes. No one saw the figure of the guildmaster for three days after that. Later on, I was looked at with begrudging eyes, but she didn't complain since it did taste terribly good.

◇

Next I head to the viceroy mansion.

"Umu, unfortunately, even as nobles, no, precisely because we're nobles that you cannot violate that unwritten rule. If a noble violates it, his political opponent will certainly use it against him to make him lose his position."

Marquis Ashinen whom I'm consulting to warned me seriously. His tone is serious, but his expression is slovenly loose. His lust is not directed toward me, but the statue of a handsome young man which I've brought.
This was something I had bought in the duchy capital just when I was looking for buckwheat flour during our stay in the elf hometown. I couldn't judge this kind of things besides for their market price, so I bought it after consulting to the giant mama-san from the okama bar I had

visited together with Toruma back then. His judgment was reliable since the marquis looks delighted. I cut off the figure of the marquis creeping his fingers on the young man statue from my mind.

When I was buying the statue with Mama-san, I saw the children and Sera who looked happy. I couldn't call out to her since I was in disguise, but she was probably training hard since her level had risen by one. Sera is a good writer, she's been sending letters frequently. She has already sent three letters even though it's only been less than a month since we've arrived in the labyrinth city.
She's greatly different than the poor correspondent Lady Karina who still hasn't responded back even now. According to a letter from Muno Barondom, it seems that Lady Karina wants to train in the labyrinth city too. Consul Nina seems to remonstrate her sometimes, but it seems she's being ignored.
There are a lot of monsters that can break through Raka's defense in the labyrinth city, so please don't come here if possible. Even though she's annoying, I don't really want to see her beauty damaged. Please be satisfied with exterminating thieves in your territory.

Now then, my thought has been completely derailed since I really didn't want to see Marquis Ashinen and his young man statue.
Since I've heard the things I want to hear from the Marquis, I'll go consult with other people.

◇

"This is quite rare for you to visit my home."

Baronet Dyukeli who has his stern face become even more severe encourages me to sit on the sofa.
I have only come here once after the matter with saving her daughter from the lost thieves. At that time, I was invited to a banquet as thanks, and drank together with the shopkeepers of the magic tool shops and medicine shops in the labyrinth city who were under his control.

I've come to consult him since he might know some unclean ways.

"A matter that's not like you. It'll be hard even if you have a connection with the king."
"I have been made aware that it is impossible using that method, but since I am desperate to know if there's a good way to obtain my goal, I will be borrowing everyone's wisdom."

I could probably directly negotiate with the king as Nanashi, but that's also not good huh.
Fumu, maybe I don't have to worry about underhanded tricks since they don't seem to exist.

"It is not that there is no way."
"What kind of method is it?"
"Of course, it's not a direct one."

I wait for Baronet Dyukeli who's putting an overemphasis to continue his words.

"It's the same as war. Know your opponents. Ask the well-connected Viscount Shimen for anyone who wants the item that you wish. And then by negotiations, you turn those people

to become in a state where they cannot bid."

I see, information war huh. I'm glad that it's not 'actually there's a trick.'
Turning them into a state where they can't bid sounds like a crime, but even without abducting them, maybe I can turn them into a state where they're not financially strong enough to bid the item.

◇

Since the Marchioness has invited me to an afternoon tea party, I should ask her to collect information with Baronet Dyukeli's idea in mind.
After enjoying the tea and cakes and some long gossips, the talk became about the spoils from the floormaster.

"My, so even Satou-dono has something he wants."
"Yes, it is the Gift Orb. Does Retel-sama has anything you've set your eyes on?"

By the way, Retel is the Marchioness's name. After coming here so many times, I've acquired the permission to call the Marchioness's name.

"Yes, did you see that wonderful tiara? If I were to wear that to the salon during the Kingdom conference, wouldn't I become the center of attention?"
"Yes, it does really suit the Marchioness."
"How about using that egg-like big emerald in a necklace?"

The noisy wives on the surrounding flatter after the Marchioness's remark.
Baronet Dyukeli's wife stated "Panacea" in a low voice with her fleeting existence, but it doesn't seem to reach anyone's ear. I probably wouldn't have heard it if I didn't have the Straining Ear skill.

"Does the medical diet not going well?"

Since the fact that her son is sick is a secret, I obfuscate the subject.

"Yes, he doesn't like vegetables, so he didn't eat much."
"Was the recipes I gave before no good?"
"He ate the dish that Chevalier-sama's cook had made while saying that it was delicious, but he didn't eat the one made by our cooks, and said that it was bitter, or smelled of earth."

Fumu, the difference in (cooking) skill huh?
However, among the recipes that I gave there were a lot of dishes that only needed finely chopped, strained, or souped vegetables, so it shouldn't need that good of a skill...
Maybe I should make and sell vitamin supplement and vegetable juice, since there are considerable number of nobles who suffer from lack of vitamin in the labyrinth city. Let's present the trial product to Baronet Dyukeli as a thank for the talk a while ago.

The tea party became lively when the talk was about the floormaster spoils, and the Marchioness would gather information about which person want which items in the auction

before I even asked her.
Although it seems that I have to bid for the tiara too now, it's fine if I think of it as the information fee. At worst, if it became too expensive, I could just make a gorgeous imitation, and she should be consent with it.

◇

Arisa and the others besides me are mastering their new equipments in the upper and middle layer's hunting grounds.
I've culled enemies with instant death attacks and armor-penetrating ones, so they shouldn't be in danger so often. Arisa's new equipment has an automatic deployment system for defense magic, so they should be able to run with teleport magic if they encounter an unexpected situation.

It's already evening, and I've already told Ms. Miteruna that I don't need dinner, so maybe I should go to the labyrinth and eat dinner with the girls.

Everyone seems to be fighting a chimera of scorpion and spider.

"Pochi, stop its leg!"
"Aye! Split bodies attack nanodesu!"

Pochi makes full use of Flickering Movement to attack, and destroys four legs on one side of the eight-legged chimera. Just like Pochi's said, her afterimages look like split bodies.

Tama who have climbed the stalled chimera's back crushes its compound eyes with her short sword. The chimera wags its head to throw Tama off, but she turns the other short sword into a whip sword, and endure the shaking by wrapping the sword on the chimera's feeler.
Looks like Tama is able to properly use the whip sword shaped magic blade and the drill magic blade of her short swords. Since Tama was the only one skillful enough to use two kinds of function, Pochi and Nana needed to change it by voice.

Lulu fires her new smoothbore gun's bullet to the chimera's mouth that has been wrenched open by Mia's magic.

The gun that Lulu is using is a riffle with two meter and a half long barrel, and it uses magic as the explosive instead of explosive powder, shooting substance bullets. During the shooting, the repulsive force occurs on the whole gun, and bullet doesn't touch the inside of the gun barrel. I had a very hard time making this circuit mold, so I instructed her not to use the gun as a club.
The bullet only travels at about half of the speed of sound, but since it's a big 20 millimeters caliber bullet, its destructive power is extraordinary.

In fact, Arisa who was going to give the finishing strike has no turn to come out, she stamps her feet to the ground.

"Satou."

The sharp-sighted Mia who has quickly found me embraces me accompanied with a 'Pofun' sound.

"Master nanodesu!"
"Wlcome~?"

Everyone gathers after noticing that voice.
After waiting for Liza who had crushed the chimera's legs on the opposite side of Pochi's to finish collecting the magic core, I go back to the villa, taking everyone along.

"What do you think about the new equipments?"
"The performance is magnificent"
"Nice~"
"The strongest of the strongest nanodesu! It truly feels like bossss nanodesu!"

It's quite favorable on the vanguard side. I don't know Pochi's reference, so I'll ask about it from Arisa later. I feel like it's from some anime or game, but I can't remember it.

"I'm sorry master. I still cannot skilfully use the acceleration to hit well."
"Ah, with that gun, the trajectory will change even if you shake for an instant. Do your best to master it."
"Yes, I'll do my best!"

I pat the head of Lulu who grasps both her hands tightly to motivate herself, encouraging her.
After all, it's a hard to use gun even for me who have Shooting and Sniping skills at MAX. It's quite powerful if she can handle it well, so I hope she can master it.

"Overkill. The power is much higher than before, it might be better to use the old wand for support."
"Nn, excessive."

As for the rear guard, most agree that the power is too high, or so they said such luxurious problem to me.

"Like with Mia, she miscalculated the Balloon's expansion range and power, it made Pochi flew to the ceiling twice."
"Arisa! Secret!"

While looking warmly at Mia who's lightly beating Arisa, I listen to the shield-user, Nana.

"I inform that it's safely safe. The consumption of magic power has increased, and the ability to continue fighting tends to fall. I request the supply of magic power after a long time of absent."

While there is a scene where Lulu tried with all her might to stop Nana who had began to strip her armor, I gave Nana the magic power supplement as she had wished during bathing. I feel that I can just use Magic Power Transfer, but this way seems to feel better. It's like the

difference between calorie bars and proper meals huh.

After getting refreshed from the bath, I consult to Arisa about the schedule until the time we acquire Mitrhil Plate.
The X day is 10 days later.

Part 44 - The Face under the Mask

Satou's here. It's said that there are three people who look like you in the world, but while it's not so bad if it's a celebrity, I think it'll be the most annoying if you have the same face as a criminal.

◇

"Good evening, your majesty."

I talk to him with the violet-haired Nanashi's tone as carefree as possible. The other party is the king of Shiga Kingdom. I've left a letter on his office regarding my visit two days ago, but there isn't anyone besides him in this room. I think he should have left the body double in this room, and peep from another room while being surrounded by holy knights, but there are only the prime minister and the head of the Shiga Eight Sword in the next room.
I think that he's a bit too careless.

"It's been a while Nanashi."

His voice is like the body double-san too. Apparently the setting about me meeting his body double in the duchy capital is in effect.

"I've got a little business beyond the sky see."
"Fumu, the only people who are invited by the heaven are only the hero, the saint, and the savior hero of Shiga Kingdom."

No well, it's the space, not the heaven though. I guess I don't have to correct him as explaining it would be troublesome anyway.
I seem to have been recognized as the Shiga Kingdom's hero, but I ignore it.

"Sorry for taking your time your majesty."
"I do not mind. I also want to meet you."

Thanks to Arisa's supervision, I feel that my way of speaking has become more gross. I feel that there might be better way of speaking to make people not liken it with Satou. It's a regretful mistake, but I have to endure it and do it. Right, making Nanashi and Maou kill each other, and then create a new Nanashi Mk.2 might be a good idea.

"What is wrong, Nanashi?"

Oops, not good. My thought has wandered off.

"My first business is this."
"You do not need the sword of sky?"

The king frowns when he sees the fake Claiomh Solais that I've presented to him. Returning the holy sword is like declaring myself that I don't want to protect Shiga Kingdom from

demon lords. Let's quickly clear the misunderstanding.

"You misunderstand. This is a fake see. Unlike the quickly made one before, this has a function to limit as to who can be its owner and the scripture to make itself flies in the sky."

Since the fake this time is made from mostly the same material as the real Claiomh Solais, its authenticity can't be judged by some half-hearted skill. Due to the alloy made from orihalcon and true silver, it's also equipped with the automatic attacks capability by using the same scripture as the original. Its attack power is lower and it cannot split like the real thing, but it has quite the ability for a fake. I had added the circuit I learned from the elf village in order to put a function to limit the sword's owner. I originally searched the circuit to prevent Pochi's and the other's equipments from getting stolen.

With this function, only [Shiga Kingdom King] and [The One the King has admitted the ownership] can use the Claiomh Solais. The procedure for it is the same as normal knighting ceremony. Only one person can be admitted, so the ownership of last one before the current will become invalid.

"This one should be more real-like than the one from before you know?"
"Umu, it looks exactly like the real thing from what I see."
"You'll know it's fake once you try using the scripture later. I'll leave the details on this paper okay."

I tell so and pass the manual. I entrusted the writing to Tifalize, and she wrote it while looking expressionless yet happy. She must like paperwork.

"Creating a holy sword such as this in such short amount of time..."

The king groans while stroking his white beard and looking at the fake Claiomh Solais. I probably shouldn't say that it was done in one week including the planning.
Rather than that, this is just the preface, let's quickly get down to the real business.

"Oh Nanashi, would you let me see the face under your mask once."
"Sure. However, only for a bit okay, it's embarrassing."

I have already prepared a disguise mask under the outer mask since I thought that he would surely ask. This time I'm using disguise mask version two that has special see-through inhibition and recognition inhibition circuits installed. The outer mask also has recognition inhibition circuit too so it can shut out most see-through magic tools.

I don't feel like putting an air, so I just take off the outer mask and show the disguise mask.
This time I use the face of an acquaintance for the mask. An acquaintance from Japan since using one from here will cause problems. I was hesitating between Mr. Overweight's or my junior-shi's face, but since Mr. Overweight's face didn't match my body build, this time I used the junior-shi's face.

"Oooh, god!"

Huh? Maybe the king likes Junior-shi's face, he's shocked to the point of convulsing. I don't think it should be at the point of praying to god though.

"N, No, Nanashi-dono, would you show that face to the prime minister too."

Dono? Leaving that aside, please stop talking like it's an old man's last request.

"Just call me Nanashi okay, your majesty. I don't want to show my face to too many people, but it's okay if it's just prime minister-san."
"I'm sorry, then I will call him."

The prime minister who was waiting in the next room came after being called by the king. According to Toruma Memo, this person is of one of the only three duke houses in Shiga kingdom, the previous Duke Dukus-san. Looks like he has handed over the house to his son, and come to the king's side to handle administration.

This prime minster's appearance completely betray his occupation. He's a big man with bulking muscle that would very much fit if he were introduced as a general. The fan he's holding on his hand is really ill-matched. How did he become like this when he only has [Self-Defense] skill as the battle skill.

"Have you called, your majesty."

Prime minister-san seemed to have been told beforehand about Nanashi, he didn't show any surprise when he saw the masked me and asked the king about his business. We finished introducing ourselves by the king and greetings.

"Nanashi, please."
"Ho~i"

When I took off the mask, at first minister-san hardened and then began crying flood of tears.
Both the king and the minister, why do you guys react like this.
Junior-shi's face is a normal plain one, and even though you could even say that it's relatively good-looking, it shouldn't be enough to make other people shocked.

Unexpectedly, maybe it's like Lulu's case, and it's reacted strangely by the aesthetic sense of this world.

"It's enough right?"
"Umu, I thank you."

I don't think you need to thank you.

"This Dukus's house is a family that has served Yamato-sama before the founding of this kingdom. They've kept the photographed figure of Yamato-sama during the kingdom's founding with the [Figure Copy Tool].

Fu~un? That's quite an abrupt trivia.

"Yamato-samaaaa!"

After wiping his flood of tears, he tried to hug me with both arms, so I smoothly evaded. The king stopped him before he tried again, so I didn't have to evade.

Yamato-sama?
Er~r, that means junior-shi's face resembles the ancient king Yamato-san's?

However, it's impossible for them to be the same person.
In case there's a slip in time during the summoning, that fellow is weak to pressure, and easily taken by the flow more than me. At the very least Junior-shi isn't someone capable enough to be a king, or rather, not the type to create a nation.

It's another person, and even if there's a relation between them somehow, maybe Junior-shi is a descendant of the ancient king Yamato.

"I'm Nanashi you know. I'm not related to ancient king-san okay."
"Aye, understood."

No, that's the look of someone who doesn't understand.
It must be the look of someone who thinks that Nanashi is the reincarnation of Yamato-san or something.

Dang, that's right, it's the hair. It's said that violet hair is the proof of a reincarnated person, and there are a lot of reincarnated people. I think it's unbecoming of a king and a prime minister of a kingdom to hastily jump to conclusion just from the hair and face though....
Well, whatever. Correcting it is annoying, I'll leave them misunderstand.
For now, I made sure to tell them not to treat me as the ancient king Yamato.

◇

"And, about the business, like, I want to sell magic tools in Shiga Kingdom see, would you give me the right to do commerce please?"
"Fumu, very well, I will prepare it."

An immediate permission. As expected of monarchy. It's nice for this kind of thing to be done fast.

"The commercial right is not a problem. Nanashi-dono, what kind of items are you intending to sell?"
"Un, I'm thinking, like, magic equipments and tools, and also things related to medicines. I've prepared airships as the featured product."
"Airships?!"

Asked by the prime minister-san, I roughly outlined the goods' genre but the king exclaimed at the word [Airship].

"Un, I was thinking of selling large transport ships, and smaller carriage-sized ships for private use. The one besides the transport ship has to use the aerodynamic engine though, so it'll start selling a bit later see."

The transport ship has the same performance as the airship that I've caught a sight of in the duchy capital. The cruising speed and maximum altitude are about the same, and it's 40% larger. I've designed it to have big load capacity.
I want to make the private airships popular among the nobles in order for it not to be unusual when I have one myself during our travel between cities.

"Private use?! Using the precious aerodynamic engines for private use pleasantry is it?"

What an exaggeration.

"It'll be convenient for viceroys if they can freely come and go to the royal capital right?"
"It is true that it's convenient, but do you have such abundant amount of aerodynamic engines?"
"Un, relatively see."

Back then with Lulu, we got a lot of it when we were over fishing tunas and narwhals. At that time, shark-shaped monsters were coming to attack the tunas from the sky. I quickly disposed of them, but their identity turned out to be the famous monstrous fish of which the aerodynamic engine are taken from.

I got a bit too much of the aerodynamic engine's parts since I had obliterated every bad monsters who were coming for the tunas around the vicinity of the ocean area. The tunas and the narwhals had parts that could be used for aerodynamic engine too but they could not output as much power as the shark's parts. Moreover, since it seems that only the shark type ones attacks the towns around the coast, only materials from this type are known to people.

"How many can you concretely prepare."
"Five large transport ships, and 20 small private ships, I think."

The prime minister inquired with slightly flustered tone due to my vague answer, so I revealed them the concrete number.
By the way, the large ship has 30 times the output power of the small ship.

Rather than that, the problem is whether they give the permissions or not, the king and minister-san look pensive.
Doing illicit trade is bad, right.

"Nanashi, due to the national defense concern, freely selling airships will be troubling."
"I intend to only sell it to Shiga Kingdom Nobles at present, no good?"

I asked in disgustingly cute way.
Ah, my life is decreasing...

"U, umu, then---"
"Please give the royal family the preferential right."

The prime minister-san set a condition as if covering the king's words who was seemingly going to give his permission. Interrupting the king sounds like a lese majeste.

"When you're selling airships, please negotiate with the royal family or the royal army first."
"Okkey."
"Okkey? I don't know that word, what does that mean?"
"Ah, sorry sorry. It's, like, affirmative."

After such exchanges, I was able to get the commercial right to sell magic tools in the kingdom.

I gave one among the five large transport ships as a sample, and was granted the commercial right and a medallion due to that achievement. This medallion that minister-san has arranged is the proof of the royal purveyor merchant, it allows me to have business transactions with nobles in equal standing.

The price of the large transport ships couldn't be set without looking at the real things, so it was for another day. For now, I'm told that I should present the ships to the airport that's used for presentation on the edge of the royal capital three days later.

As for other samples, I also give some magic sword, magic spear, and several kinds of magic medicines. As for the magic weapons, it's established that a magic sword is worth 150 gold coins, and a magic spear is 200 gold coins with excessive profit, but I sell my magic sword for 100 gold coins and magic spear for 200 gold coins.
These magic weapons aren't like the one from the duchy capital that use only bronze, they have mithril and brass alloy membrane covering the bronze base to make them look good. Their power as weapons are about the same since they're both casted magic swords, but thanks to the membrane, it won't become rusty or decayed, it's easy to maintain.

The medicines line-up are the same as from the duchy capital, in addition I've added nutrient and nourishment tonics. I present large quantity of nourishment tonics to the king and the prime minister-san under the pretext of being samples.
Please fight for 24 hours.

Ah, that means you can sleep for four hours huh. How enviable.

The payment will be in three days later since the goods will be delivered with the airships delivery.

Obtaining the commercial right this time is for the sake of the auction later.
Even though my power of money is unparalleled, I'm thinking of reducing the assets of people who are likely to become my rivals.

Now then, the preparation for the auction is going well.

As an extra, I gave Sir Sokel to prime minister-san when I was visiting the royal capital for the goods delivery. The man should be able to make good use of Sir Sokel's testimony.

The fact that the real identity of the guy called His Majesty is still a mystery makes me feel uneasy, but I'm expecting the kingdom's authorities and spies to uncover it.

Part 45 - Mithril Plate (3)

Satou's here. The end of year party season is the time for banquets where they served yakiniku and hot pot. However, there are a lot of people who have works during the 31st December and the new year day that they don't notice that the year has changed.

◇

"Satou!"

The one who first found me when I got back from the royal capital while bringing souvenirs was Mia after all. Looks like spirits become flustered when teleport magic is used, and although it's only for a blink, she seems to notice it.

Slightly after Mia, Pochi and Tama were also running here from the villa. It seems these two can sense either magic or space fluctuating, and aware when I'm teleporting. Since they know it [Somehow], the two themselves are not sure what is it that they're sensing.

"Knew it! It's master nanodesu!"
"Wlcome~"

The three arrive at the same time.
Mia is 'plop'-ing from the front.
Tama energetically jumps with 'pyon', landing on my neck and assuming shoulder riding position. The delicately fail, "Pao daru~in", when she landed is probably Arisa's fault.
Pochi spiritedly bumps with her head using a force that'll even knock down a knight. To prevent her from hitting the head of Mia who's on my lap, I gently receive her with Magic Hand.

Pochi appeals with teary eyes from below while saying, "Arisa is~"
I wonder what happens?

She only answers with au, au, "Arisa is" when I ask the reason, the talk doesn't advance. Due to Lulu's and Liza's disciplining her that she shouldn't talk bad about other people, looks like she can't speak abusive languages about other people.

"Nn, emotionally unstable."

From the side, Mia tells me who's carrying Pochi, but I don't know if she means it about Pochi or Arisa. I'd love to have more words.

"Kengengakukau~?"

I guess she meant kenkengougou (uproar) or kankangakugaku (heated debate)?
Tama who's riding over my shoulders is peering while scrambling my hair.
I don't really understand, I guess I'll just ask Arisa directly.

"I've brought some souvenirs with me, let's talk while eating them."
"Meat~?"
"Sweets?"
"It's both of them."

The three's spirits have raised from my words. When Pochi's eyes meet mine, she awkwardly turns away slightly while saying, "I have another stomach for meat nanodesu!", and then acts like she's whistling.
If meat are for another stomach, then what's the real stomach for? I'd like to cross-examine her for an hour.

When I open the villa's door, I can hear the dispute between Arisa and the others.

"That's why! I've said since awhile ago! We should do the first blow by attacking from afar with magics that have maximum attack power!"
"Negative. If that blow cannot defeat it, Arisa and the others in the rear guard will be in danger."
"That's right. The first spear is the honor of a soldier. The proper method should be us vanguards charging and whittling the enemy, and then Arisa and the others on the rear guard will give the decisive strike from behind."
"But, Liza-san and Pochi will be injured then!"
"Arisa, I should be aiding them, so I propose."
"Nana's guard isn't impregnable. Even a mid-ranking demon won't leave unscathed if they're hit by the triple attack of Magi Hydra's breath, magic and bite."
"It is all thanks to the equipments and the new magic. I recommend to forward the praise to master."

Looks like it's reaching the climax.
Or rather, even though I had already said that they should not fight the Magi Hydra since it had charm attacks, they still fought with it huh. After the meal, it's punishment time.

◇

"In other words, Arisa, Liza and Nana have arguments regarding the tactics, and misunderstanding during the fight?"
"That's right, but that's not it."

How complicated.

"Arisa is saying some unreasonable thing nodesu."
"Eh~, didn't I only say that you should use Lulu's smoothbore gun to hit the Bringbird."
"Arisa, hitting the Bringbird with magic is difficult enough, it's unreasonable you know?"

Lulu tells Arisa while preparing the tablewares and the dishes on the table.

"But, Lulu hit it right."
"It was a Bringbird that was resting on a rock and from a distance though. I also had the interlinked goggle and the space stake that helped the gun barrel's stability. I don't have

confidence to hit a Bringbird that moves like Pochi-chan, I think."

Lulu cutely puts her finger on her chin while thinking, "Nn~", and corrects Arisa.

The interlinked goggle of the smoothbore gun is a thing I've added to cover the difficulty of using the scope on the gun barrel. Linked to the smoothbore gun, the goggle will display image from the scope. However it doesn't have enough speed to display video, it's barely enough to show grainy picture of the point blank shot.
The space stake is something that eliminates the smoothbore gun's shaking, I've crafted it by copying the world tree's technology. It's absolutely nothing compared to the space stake that holds the world tree, but it can stabilize the gun barrel to completely eliminate the shaking.

This magic circuit is activated by a button or voice input. The reply is recorded from me. I didn't feel shy since during the time when our game didn't have enough budget, the staffs took turn to act as voice actors.

"And, did Pochi hit it?"
"I did hit it nodesu... with Magic Edge Cannon."

Pochi's words fell in volume for the last line. I see, when the bullet didn't hit, she liken the smoothbore gun barrel to a sword and used Magic Edge Cannon out of desperation huh.

"Pochi is amazing~ Magic Cannon~ Bending, de gozaru."

Tama reported Pochi's feat while looking up from my lap.
Magic Edge Cannon's orbit can bend huh. She's like the strongest space pirate from somewhere. I should practice it next time.

"However, why were you practicing with the smoothbore gun?"
"It's a measure against enemies that are dangerous to approach."
"Then you can just use Magic Edge Cannon right?"
"I mean, something like Floormaster must have strong magic resistance. I want to increase our means to do remote physical attacks."

I see, that one huh.
However, we have buckshot bullets for smoothbore gun for that purpose.

"Buckshot is no good. Friendly fire is scary, and the power is weak isn't it."
"Its power should be quite powerful if you use acceleration formation."

It can even drop a jet fighter if it hit after all.

"Okay! The difficult talk stops here! Please continue after the meal."

Lulu who had completed the meal preparation clapped her hands to gather everyone's attention, and declared the closure of the meeting. If she doesn't close it forcefully like this, the argument will become too heated, and the dishes will become cold.

◇

"Uhha~! Is this marbled beef? Where did you get it?"
"Un, I found a ranch being attacked by a giant monster during my way back from the royal capital. I got it as thanks for getting rid of that monster."

It seemed to be an official ranch, and I got the meat from the half-eaten cows as the reward. The ranch called it [Damaged Article] but it sounds like a nonsense when you look at this lovely beef with its interweaving lean meat and fat meat. Although, thanks to that, I got actual meat instead of money as the monster extermination reward, so I'm grateful for the ranch-shi's opinion.

10 platters of sliced meat are served before our eyes. And then, there's a peculiar-shaped pot with steam raising from it beside them.

"Kuh~ I didn't think that I'd eat shabu-shabu when I came here!"
"The meat person is flat nanodesu!?"
"Diett?"

Pochi and Tama lowered their point of view to the table's height, checked the thin meat from the side, and gave such impressions. As far as the two are concerned, meat is probably something thick.

Fufufu, I'll shatter that illusion of yours.

"This is you see, the thing called shabu shabu---"
"Forget about that, let's quickly eat!"

Since Arisa demands me to stop my explanation, the meal begins.

Bottles of sesame sauce and ponzu, and small dishes of condiments are lined up around the large platters.
The condiments are grated radish, carrots, gingers, cut spring onions, green perilla, onions, and continuing on, sesame seeds left from the making of sesame sauce, and various other things like crash nuts and wasabi. The more the merrier right.
I hesitated whether I should also put crab and sashimi besides the beef, but since today is our first shabu-shabu, it's beef only.

"Hold one slice of the beef like this, quickly dip the beef to the hot soup, dip it to the sauce and then eat it."

I explain to them while eating it.
First I use plain ponzu to eat the meat. As expected of the official Shiga Royal Family purveyor merchant. It's delicious enough to be comparable to the Kobe beef and Matsusaka beef that the company president treated me a long time ago. The tuna from the other day was good, but beef has its own taste after all.

"You can add any condiment you prefer on your own. For the first time, try eating the beef

without the condiment."

With my encouragement, Liza holds one slice of the beef and dips it into the hot soup while looking very serious. Before I knew it, she has become skillful in handling chopsticks.
However, you really don't have to look so serious while eating.

Since Pochi and Tama can't use chopsticks, I've prepared slender tongs for them to use. If I had prepared forks, they'd likely drop the meat into the hot soup after all. I've added three kind of symbols, that are of dog, cat, and chick, on the tongs' flaps. Nana nabbed the tongs with chick symbol from the very beginning.

"Delish. It's A5 rank at least! I can eat this no matter how much."
"Delicious nodesu! The meat of eego is as good as the tuna and the whale nanodesu!"
"Delishlish~?"
"I announce that the sesame sauce is the strongest and unrivaled."
"Nana-san, ponzu put with grated radish is also delicious you know."
"Nn, delicious."

Everyone eats with relish while unanimously giving their praise. Looks like Mia likes it too due to its light flavor.
I was worried with Liza who was chewing alone quietly, but since the corner of her eyes looked really happy, she must be immersing herself in the taste. Enjoy it thoroughly to the heart.
Arisa, Pochi, and Tama are quickly swallowing their shares like they're drinking. There are more than 100 kilos of them, eat them as you like. However, I have to warn Arisa not to eat too much.

"Kuh, the sesame sauce reigns supreme, but the ponzu is also nice! To have this many condiments variation come out!"
"Arisa is pushing the wasabi plate even while saying that, you can't trick me nodesu. Pochi has learned her lesson nodesu."
"I like sesame sauce."
"Everything is delicious~?"
"Uu, it's too delicious, I could eat too much."

It's interesting to see everyone picking their choice. Looks like Pochi has splendidly seen through Arisa's trick. Lulu is restraining herself since she's worried about her weight, but it feels like she's losing to the charm of the king beef. Isn't it alright once a while.
The flavor would have increased if there were chili oil, XO sauce, or some broad bean chili sauce. If I'm not mistaken, XO sauce and broad bean chili sauce use miso as the base, I'll try to make some later. What about the chili oil I wonder? Maybe red pepper?

Since Liza is eating in an unusual way, by putting a bit wasabi on the dipped meat and then dip it on the soy sauce, I tried to mimic her. This way of eating is like with sashimi, but it's quite nice.

However, Pochi, Tama and Mia who saw it and then ate while mimicking it, groaned while

pining their nose. I burst into laughter when I saw them and got myself lightly hit by the three.

I distribute hot chocolate to the three youth troupe who have suffered from wasabi.

"U~n, I'm full. Hot chocolate eh~ It'll be nice if there's Choco Fondue or Cheese Fondue next~"

Arisa requested so when she saw Pochi and the others drank hot chocolate. I had often eaten cheese fondue but never choco fondue. Maybe I should try making one.

"What kind of dish nanodesu?"
"It's fondue meat poured with chocolate and cheese. Since the fondue bird only dwells deep inside a mountain with beautiful water, it's been called the phantom dish."
"Fondue hunt~!?"
"I want to hunt it nodesu!"
"Doubt."

Pochi and Tama were taken by Arisa's lie, but Mia saw through it at once. Looks like cheese fondue exists in Boruenan forest, introduced by the hero Daisaku.

◇

Next day, it seems they're training with the assumption that the floormaster can null physical attacks.

When they came back for dinner, everyone was down due to magic power exhaustion.
It seemed they had trained until they used up all the magic power potion I had given them. I was glad that they had enough sense to leave enough magic power to come back.

Since my magic power was on the verge of exhaustion too, I didn't use [Magic Power Transfer] magic, but made them dishes that were good for recovering magic power, but it was somehow unpopular.
Maybe I should have taken the magic power from the charged magic swords for emergency instead?

"No meat~"
"Pochi is reflecting nodesu. That's why, please put even tiny bit of meat nodesu."
"Pochi, Tama. You're 100 years too early to request meal from master."

Pochi and Tama seem to think that this is a punishment, they look up with pitiful look on their face while being downhearted. Pochi who used her fingers to express the "tiny bit" part was cute. She must have been expressing the thickness of meat.
Liza was reminding the two, but her voice didn't have power at all in it. Liza must also be shocked about the no meat. I think it doesn't taste bad since I have made the stock soup from chicken bones though~

"Even though I'm not dieting, why this meal! More protein! Gibumi mito purizu!"

"They're dishes good for recovering magic power."

Moreover, these boiled beans have protein don't they.
As for the other three girls, they're eating without complaining since they don't dislike vegetables.

My magic power had restored enough to do the magic power transfer during the meal, but I took this chance to observe the recovery rate of Arisa's and the others' magic power. I also have to make more magic power potion later.

In addition, for the four people who like meat, I let them eat as many whale meat steak as they like after their magic power have recovered. No, I stopped Arisa before she overate. I'd not like to accompany her on her diet again after all.

Part 46 - Mithril Plate (4)

Satou's here. There's an impression that the visiting day is the big moment for children, but when I've become an adult, I notice that it's the place for the children's guardians to compete. The teachers who have prepared the stage for the children to show off with good balance must be having a stomachache.

◇

"Wa~y, it's Poa nanodesu!"
"Shiya, been awhile~?"

Pochi and Tama who see the two people I've brought to the villa welcome them with raised arms. These two are helpers for the floormaster subjugation.

Unfortunately, they're not going to be battle forces, but as paddings to add the number of people. Each of these two lead 5 trolls and 10 spriggans, and 10 leprechauns. Just now, I had disguised myself as a plain middle-aged man, and guided them all to register in the west guild. Since they were all unusual races around here, everyone disguised themselves as a human. It was impossible for the trolls considering their size, so they were disguised as major little giants.

I've reserved one whole inn on the ground for every one of them besides two elves to stay at.

It's the high class inn which we have stayed at when we first came to the labyrinth city. There wasn't any other inn that could hold the trolls. Since all of the meals and liquor are my treats, they should currently be enjoying human dishes for the first time. I'm slightly worried whether the trolls would break the inn when they're drunk.

"Ou, Pochi! Are you well?! Let's have some practice later! Prepare some wooden swords!"
"Aye! Nanodesu!"

Pochi's master, Ms. Porutomea grins while holding the blue rose sword that I've given her before with one hand.

Pochi who went back to the villa returned while carrying two Soft Swords overhead and looking happy. Looks like they intend to start the training immediately.

"Tama, are you in good health."
"Saku-saku de gozaru~? Nin nin."

Shishitouya-shi, Tama's master, is an elf-san who dresses casually. He has calm demeanor yet warrior air around him, but since he looks young outside, he looks like a middle schooler who tries hard, it's a somehow heartwarming. Since his appearance is shota-like, he's Arisa's favorite elf-san.

These two look carefree and it doesn't seem like they will start training, so I take them along to the villa where Liza's masters, Gurugapoya-shi and Yuseku-shi, and Nana's master, Keriuru-shi and Ms. Gimasarua are waiting. These people and the other two people whom I brought today also registered on the guild while bringing 10-15 disguised people each.

The 50 people whom I've brought ahead of time are the beastkin people living in Boruenan forest. After they had entered the dungeon, I teleported with them to the Ivy Mansion and treated them to a feast made by Leriril.

"Ou! Shiya. Yer' not with Poa huh?"
"Poa is having a match with Pochi."
"Geez, that battle mania is handful."
"She sure is."

From the viewpoint of a mild human like me, these five masters are of the same kind.

"I am no match for Liza-dono after all."
"No, against Keriuru-dono is the first time I have a hard time."
"Is that excluding Satou?"
"Because master is special."

Liza and Keriuru-shi, the dwarf, said those remarks after finishing their serious match.

Even though I said serious match, they weren't crossing swords.
These two have been doing not-sake-tasting, but meat-tasting in the living room.

Liza praised me so, but I don't have absolute taste or anything. I felt that my taste had been sharpened when I raised the Cooking skill, but I'm no match against these two who can distinguish the producing area, and whether it's from male or female animals just by tasting the meat.
I just knew it by Appraisal skill and AR (Augmented Reality) indicators.

Liza and her master aren't the only people who have gone into their own world.

"I see, so we have to be careful with its Magic Invalid (Neutral Magic) and Rampage (Stampede) condition that happens after its health's been decreased."
"Umu, that's right. My master also had troubles with those two points."

The shadowkin, Seoru-shi is lecturing Arisa about the way to fight the floormaster. Looks like his party was in charge of scouting when Trazayuya-shi was staying in the labyrinth city. I asked for him to come here when I heard that he had participated in the floormaster subjugation.

"Arisa-dono, you are strong. However, the floor master is in another dimension. Even for us who had repulsed a dragon, we lost two out of three times we challenged the floormaster. If you judge that you cannot win, retreat immediately, and risk for another opportunity."
"Thank you, Seoru-san! It's OK! Because we have a trump card! We will hit hard with a boom tomorrow! Tomorrow we're going to have a banquet with food you've never seen

before!"

Arisa is even more flared up after hearing Seoru-shi's warning.

That's fine and all, but I'm the one who's going to make the dishes for the banquet right? Please stop strangely upping the hurdles. My repertoire is going to run out soon. I do have a lot of fairy dishes that the elf dish study group have taught me, but elves would have been tired with those already.
Since they are served Japanese and Western food for a while here, it might be good if I put out some Chinese cuisines and original one.

◇

The next morning, I got a troubling message from Shishitouya-shi who had come back to the inn.
The trolls who were having a party until late at night seemed to have destroyed the inn's walls while they were dead drunk. It had been largely broken. The repair cost will be quite considerable.
I've decided to use this incident as an opportunity to hire them.

"Is there any trouble?"
"Oh, if it isn't an excellent young lord. Actually, our friends have made a careless mistake degozaru."

While looking bored, Ms. Porutomea ignore my and Shishitouya-shi's cheap play.

"I-if it isn't Pendragon-sama."

I ask the inn manager who's noticed and greeted me awkwardly about the damage cost.
Looks like it's 50 gold coins. Certainly, the cost for repairing this much damage and the compensation for the inn closure during the repair should be that much.

"Fumu, you guys seem to be skilled explorers. I will bear the cost of repair for the inn if you're willing to lend me your power."
"Oh! We are indebted to you. We will even help you subjugate the floor master!"

Although I'm not one to speak, Shishitouya-shi is quite the ham actor. However, he seems to really like it despite failing at it, Shishitouya-shi is acting dramatic in high spirits. Well, it's fine as long as Tama isn't infected with some strange influence.

I pay the cost of repair to the inn manager. It has decreased to 28 gold coins for some reason when we're chatting for a bit. How curious.

◇

When I'm taking along Shishitouya-shi and the others to the west gate, the townspeople are buzzing and saying whatever they like. They must be surprised with the big bodies of the trolls.

"Oy, aren't that the Pendragon young master?"
"What's he doing? He's usually with little girls and big-breasted beauties isn't he."
"If it's the Black Spear Liza-san and the Maid King Lulu-san, they've gone to the labyrinth several days ago."
"Did they not get back on schedule? That's worrisome."
"There's no need to be worried, when even the people of [Pendora] training school are that strong. The only thing that can hurt the girls of the main members should only be the floormaster~ rite'?"

Maybe due to the food distribution, before I knew it, we have become quite popular among the young explorers.

The [Pendora] that those guys are talking about is the alumnus of the training school. As their graduation certificate, we gave a blue mantle dyed with simplified Pen Dragon crest--A dragon holding a pen--to each three of them, so they became known with that name.
This simplified crest is Arisa's idea, and the favorite of Nana. The sketches that Arisa drew in the beginning have been put into Nana's pouch as an important thing even now.

However, Maid King huh, where did that nickname come from? I think it should be Queen instead of King for Lulu though.

"Maybe he's taking those seemingly little giants guys on the floormaster subjugation mission?"
"Subjugation relying on the power of money huh.... Maybe he would hire us too."
"Don't even think 'bout it. The guys who defeated a monster like Hunter Mantis unhurt are going to fight an opponent dangerous enough to prompt them hiring helpers. People like us won't even be useful as meat shield."

Alright, as planned, my goal of making a lot of people witness me entering the labyrinth while bringing a lot of battle forces has been met.
I was displaying the figure of me negotiating with four people who brought along 50 people on an open terrace with a lot of explorers, so they should be in the impression that I had hired a lot of parties.

Fuuh, next I just need to join Arisa and the others, achieve safe hunting, and it's mission complete.

◇

A little while after we've entered the labyrinth, I take everyone I've brought along to the party meeting place in the Ivy Mansion.

Since the slaves who were staying in the Ivy Mansion are working on the experimental farms in the labyrinth city and the outskirts, they're not here anymore.

Tifaliza and Nell are working in Echigoya Firm that I've created in the royal capital. Only the noble daughter explorers are still staying in the Ivy Mansion.
The five compounders in Furusau city who make medicines are treated as the medicine

division of this firm, while Porina and the others who are staying in the worker tenement in labyrinth city, making daily products are treated as the the general goods division.
Our best selling item is the kickboard which Arisa's designed. It's popular enough in the royal capital that it's generated two months build-to-order list. Even though it's something that anyone can create, did the past teleported and reincarnated people not make it? It was nice that it was selling well, but transporting it to the royal capital was troublesome, so I bought a workshop in the royal capital suburb and decided to produce it there. I'm planning to send Porina as the workshop manager.

"Satou-sama, are you bringing trolls in addition to the spriggans and the leprechauns now? Giving my all is worth the trouble with this!"
"Is there enough ingredients and liquor?"
"Yes!"

Leriril's tension is high, looks like she's happy to welcome the various fairy kins.

"There are plenty of wine and mead!"
"Then, I trust you to entertain them."
"Yes! Please leave it to me!"

I leave Magic Puppets to help the enthusiastic Leriril, and bring along Pochi's and Tama's masters to the villa where Arisa and the others are staying.

◇

"Everyone, are you prepared?"
"Yes nanodesu! Both the lunchbox and the snacks are perfect nanodesu!"
"There's Bananas too~"
"Of course nanodesu! Bananas aren't with the snacks desuyo!"

Pochi and Tama hold bananas on both their hands and take a pose.
I glanced at Arisa, but the suspect was busy completing preparation, she didn't notice it.

"I inform that the equipment check is complete. The character bento that Lulu's made has a chick drawn too, so I boast."

The fully equipped Nana takes her lunch box from her fairy bag and shows it to me.
The equipment and lunch box of these three are similar.

The vanguards are wearing full armors I've made from orihalcon recently, while the rear guards are equipped with dress armors which have magic boost function. Mia's and Arisa's dresses look showy like they're some magical girls, probably because I've left the designs to Arisa.
Lulu's equipment is basically a maid uniform, but since she has the duty to protect Arisa and Mia if push comes to shove, she's the next heavily equipped one after Nana.

I project the summoning room for the floor master of Area 66 in mid-air. Arisa who looked at it and confirmed the objective place by sight used [Gate] magic to open the road there.

Now, let's go.
We stepped into the opened gate toward Area 66.

Part 47 - Mithril Plate (5)

Satou's here. I think surprise should only be allowed if it's a good thing. Nowadays, with all my power, I want to be spared from incidents.

◇

There is only one room in Area 66 of the upper layer.
It's a huge opens space where the summoning circle for the floormaster is located. It's spacious enough for me to dismantle five whales here, the ceiling is also high, reaching 100 meters.
Since the room is wide, you can see that it's flat but there are a lot of 2-3 meters big rocks scattered around besides on the center, so there's no problem with covers. I don't expect them to be able to become walls against the floormaster's attacks though.

"What should we do? Should I be the one who summons the floormaster?"
"It's alright! I'll do it!"

I suggested so since it was the most dangerous position, but Arisa whose eyes were glittering declined.

"I've confirmed with Seoru-san yesterday, it always can't move for 10 seconds after the summoning."
"I see, still, don't be careless and do it after you set up defense magic okay?"
"Un, I know. Sheesh, you're really a worrywart."

I warn Arisa while filling her portion of magic power that has been used to open the Gate.

Everyone takes up their battle position, keeping a bit of distance away from the vacated center lot. The floormaster's magic will be different depending on its type, so Mia's also positioned herself in the location where Nana and Lulu can protect her.

"Everyone! You've taken your position right! I'll begin!"

I transmit Arisa's voice with wind magic to everyone.
It's hard for voices to echo here since this room is too wide.

Arisa put the Magic Core that will become the trigger on the earthenware pot with strange designs located on the altar. According to the AR, it's a Holy Grail.

"I am the one who challenges the impossible! As someone with predestined length of life, I become the one who go against the god, the devil, and the law of the world! I erect this proof here and now in order to seek competition against the floor master! Carrying the three proofs, I will reach thou place soon! I am a challenger! O trial, appear here now!"

Responding to Arisa's chuunibyou-like summoning passage, red light is emitted from the summoning circle. When Arisa has finished chanting, light so intense it's hard to open your

eyes run on top of the summoning circle.

And then, that guy appears as if welling up from the summoning circle.

◇

"Ah, excuse me. I've taken advantage of your summoning circle. The floor master should come soon, don't mind me and go challenge it."

An around 180-centimeter-tall gentleman has appeared on the summoning circle. He's wearing nicely tailored white three-piece suit and a white coat, holding a one meter tough stick on his hands which have matching white gloves on. With a silk hat on his armpit, he speaks to Arisa in friendly manner.

Arisa who's beside me grips my arm while trembling.

"Fumu, can you see it? I won't seal your mouth. The only ones I want to overthrow are the gods and their fanatics. Sorry, but I'm not fond of utterly obliterating gods' puppets for my self-satisfaction, so don't even think about challenging me okay?"

The dog-head demon lord with violet fur tells so as if he's pitying her.
Strangely enough, my Crisis Perception isn't reacting. He's probably serious about not wanting to interfere.

According to AR indicators, his skills are unknown unfortunately, but his level is the record high. Yet it's still not even half of my level, however, this guy's kind of class has attacks that can break through my defense magic, so everyone could be hurt if I don't interact with him carefully.

"De, demon lord."

With one hand, I support Arisa who's lost her balance from the shock. Right at that time my finger seemed to have caught on her veil, rolling it open a little, exposing her violet hair.

"Hou, no wonder you can see."

The demon lord who was going to leave saw Arisa's hair and turned back.

"O seed girl who has fragments hidden within you, I'll give you an advice."

--So Arisa really has god's fragments after all.

"Eventually you will arrive at the truth. However, do not ever despair. Whether you're reduced to a demon lord who lost your emotion and be defeated by the hero, or a demon lord with reason like me who chooses to fight against the world, it is decided by the strength of your heart. Although, it also depends on your choice whether you become a demon lord or avert your eyes from the truth and live on as a human."

Fumu, he's rational despite being a demon lord, or rather, he's saying some meddlesome

advice. I didn't want Arisa to hear about this if possible.

I gave a signal with my hands toward Nana and the others behind.

"Be careful of the hero. That guy is the hound of Parion. Kukkukku, hound huh, a dog-head like me saying that is like a gag."

Receiving the signal, Nana and Lulu deploy overlapping physical and magic defense.
The content is "A powerful enemy has appeared, put importance on your life."

I speak to him in order to confirm several things.

"Can I ask you something?"
"I won't lend my ear to a baggage carrier manservant. If you want to talk with me, raise your level to this girl's."

The dog-head demon lord turns his view toward me for the first time. Come to think of it, the Exchange column should have my level at 34.
The demon lord who saw me looked puzzled, but then pondered as if he had noticed something. He puts his finger on his forehead, and then looks up to the sky with a 45-degree slant like a narcissist.

"Impersonating a human in a place like this, aren't you too whimsical?"

He spits out such words as if he's tired.
Don't tell me he saw through my level 310? Even so, saying me impersonating a human is cruel.

"Be moderate with your play. I have the important work of burning down the temples around the world from now on."

The temples--

The corpse of Sera from the time with the wild boar king is reflected on my mind like a flashback.
And then I saw the happy figures of the temple priests starting from the head miko.

--Burning them down?!

My body acts as soon as I heard those words.
I push Arisa to Nana behind with Flash Drive, and then using Flash Drive again, I get close to the demon lord and thrust a holy sword toward his throat. The sword stops after the tip's pierced through for a bit a thin plate that's appeared before his eyes.

I'm quick tempered if I do say so myself. I might have been influenced by the labyrinth city a little.
I saw the illusion of the demon lord killing Sera and the head miko after hearing the remark earlier. Those girls should not have any way to escape that fate if they're up against this guy.

"--you're something absurd like always. To pierce through the Absolute Physical Defense (Anti-Physical) that completely nulls physical attack like this."
"Sorry but I cannot approve your remark earlier."

Good grief, even though I thought that he was a demon lord that could coexist with us. I let my guard down since he ends his words normally.
Or rather, please stop speaking like you're my acquaintance. I don't have any dog-head demon lord acquaintance.

"Do you want to avoid the temples getting burned down?"
"That's right."

I'm thinking of ways to defeat the demon lord--no good, it's too cramped here, everyone will get rolled up. If I use magic with all my might, everyone won't get out unscathed with their current level and equipments.

"Let's go out for a bit."

I caught his coat, and teleported to a desert to the west of the labyrinth city.
Save for a rainy day. I'm glad that I've prepared a teleport point for experimenting with Lulu's smoothbore gun on the desert beforehand.

◇

I thought that the demon lord would resist the teleportation, but he surprisingly followed along obediently.

"Do you have any intention to retract your statement earlier?"
"None. That might as well be the meaning of my existence. I became a demon lord for the sake of destroying the wooden dolls of the gods' temples after all."

I tried to change his mind, but it was no use huh.
I slashed at him since I was heated just now, but if possible I'd have liked us to meet a common ground to talk.
However, judging from the demon's lord tone and behavior, it looks to be impossible.

"Fumu, I wonder how many times have I been killed by you with this? However, I'll bite back once in a while. Even I have pride as the Demon Lord Origin who had burned down temples around the world 20.000 years ago."

Has it already been decided that he'll lost from the beginning?
Apart from that, another important point is, "many times he has been killed." He probably will be revived in times even if I kill him. Sometimes ago, someone said to me that gods and demi-gods will be revived on their own even if they died. This guy must be in the domain of demi-god, no doubt about it. Thanks to that, he can fight without hesitation.

Nevertheless, the demon lord has been around since that long time ago even though the history of hero is only for 1300 years huh. I don't know how he knows that 20.000 years

have passed, but that's trivial.

If I can't avoid fighting, I will fight with all my power.
If he's in the same class as the Golden Wild Boar King I've fought before, this shouldn't be too hard of a fight.

Without leisurely waiting for the signal to start, I take the preemptive attack with [Laser] magic.
I didn't use [Condense] magic to stack it this time. It wouldn't be a surprise attack if I used superfluous magic.

The bullseye magic that once roasted the Great Monstrous Fish (Tovukezeera) warped its trajectory like avoiding the demon lord's body and drilled through the desert, creating many hollowed lines.

Why did it miss?

"Have you forgotten? Before my unique skill『Probability Fluctuation (Trickster)』, magic and weapons of exact shooting type won't pass through."

This damn cheater. I understand Arisa's feeling a little. It should be called Cheat Skill instead of Unique Skill.
However, his misunderstanding seems to be still continuing on, he reveals his own unique skill which honestly helps.
It's quite an unfair skill, but it doesn't seem to be related to whether it's against a direct attack or an area attack. I was surprised that the laser trajectory was veered off, but I wonder if swinging the laser would work.

"Well then, allow me to fight you."

He picks his furs around his ears, and then scatters it by blowing it.

"--O my followers."

Those furs become violet-colored dogs which swoop down together.
Are you Sun Wu-Kong!

The indicator shows that the dogs running in the sky are level 50 Ghost Hounds. It seems they can use [Disintegrate] breath.

Since they have some troublesome-looking attack, I burn them all at once with [Fire Storm] magic before the dogs can spread out. Unlike [Furnace Flame (Forge)], this magic has extensive area of effect, so it's easy.

"You have crazy power like always. It doesn't look like the low ranked fire magic [Fire Circle] at all. You are worth fighting indeed."

No, no, Flame Storm is of intermediate rank!

--Hmm?

I noticed a slightly unpleasant thing while I was retorting the demon lord in my mind.
Is there someone who can make lower ranked fire magic to have the same power as my Fire Storm? If an existence like that exist, it's probably something akin to the Demon God.

While feeling tired, I change my objective from [Exterminating the Demon Lord] to [Gathering Information]. For the sake of everyone's safety and the sightseeing life from now on, I have to gather information from this guy.

Gathering information from someone I can't go easy on is like playing some impossibly hard game, but someone like this guy will probably chatter on his own.

Part 48 - Dog-Head Demon Lord

Satou's here. There's this word, Equivalent Exchange. Receiving thing of equal value as a compensation for another thing that's presented to you is an act that has existed since time immemorial. From ancient Japanese, there are legends about people asking for rain or abundant harvest by sending prayers and offerings to the gods. The gods in another world impart oracles about disasters, and help summoning heroes, but I wonder what do they get in return. I'm slightly interested with it.

◇

There are two things I have to ask the demon lord.

The most important thing is about the god's fragment. He said that the trigger to become a demon lord were despair and fear. Since Arisa is someone with extreme mood-swing, I'd like to know the way to get rid of the god's fragment if there's one.

--A gigantic monster with lion body and old man face comes assaulting me, I appropriately mince it with Flexible Swords.

The second one is the true identity of the one the demon lord calls as 'him'. I can roughly guess his objective, but I'd like to know his characters, techniques and tools he uses. If possible I prefer not to antagonize him, but if I don't prepare the possible countermeasures, it'll be bad if I can't protect everyone when push comes to shove.

--This time a giant made of flame and another giant made of tornado are attacking me from both sides, I use [Implosion] magic to crush them.

Next I just need to thoroughly beat this demon lord down, and try to make him vow not to put his hands on the clergymen. If he was a devil, I could make a contract so he would not break it, but I dunno about a demon lord.
If he was like the antagonists from shounen mangas, it would be easy to have our friendships sprout after the battle. If it became dangerous, I'd say it like "I'm the one that will defeat you!", and then helps would come.

--Looks like he's thought that the monsters just being strong is meaningless, he's summoning nearly 100 Crimson Scorpions on the desert now. The red points on my radar are increasing one by one.
I thought that their stingers would fly toward me since they had been summoned encircling me, but they begin firing fire balls from their scissors like a machine gun instead. Furthermore, a different wave that consisted of big scarlet scorpions appeared, the crust on their back opened like a submarine's SLBM pod, firing homing fireballs. They're like missiles.
I intercept the fireballs with [Remote Stuns] and destroy the scorpions themselves with [Condense] and [Laser]. Both hit their targets, so it's an easy fight.

Still, if he was going to recklessly summon monsters like this anyway, it'd be nice if they were some giant cows or giant pigs monsters. Please follow the example of the yellow-

skinned demon who summoned whales. Ah, I don't need something like Minotaurs though. However, the demon lord has only consumed 10% of his MP even after this many summons, what does it mean. Maybe he has stupid amount of MP like 100.0000 or something.

"Good grief, even the invincible army summoned by『Legion』just seem like goblins before you."

While looking weary, the demon lord glares at the pile of corpses defeated by my magic.
I was noncommittally brute-forcing through them since I was deep in thought, but it looks like he's not pleased with it.

Un, let's do this seriously.

◇

"I was thinking about something. Pardon me."

I tried being haughty to maintain his misunderstanding.

"'Pardon me' huh, another rare moment. I thought that you are someone who doesn't think anything but little girls?"

Geh, don't tell me he's a lolicon!
Come to think of it, Aze-san said to me that demon lords have never attacked the elf forest. I thought that they were scared of the elves' war forces, but the mastermind being a lolicon is way out of my expectation.

Oops, what am I getting disturbed for. I have to steer the story toward the matter regarding Arisa.

"I didn't think that you would offer quite a kind advice to the girl with violet hair from before."
"Reincarnated person isn't something unusual, but I pity the girl you are toying with."
"You can just take her fragment away if you pity her."
"You mean killing that girl? You should have already been aware that the fragment cannot be taken out once one did so much as treaded even one leg upon the god's seat."

Tsk, taking it out is impossible huh. The head miko was saying something about the godly prayer magic when I was consulting her about the geass, maybe I should ask her if that can be removed next time.

"Well then, shall we begin the second round? Let me show you the result of allowing me to recover my magic power."

The demon lord twirls his stick and then it transforms into a 3-meter-long pole arm that looks like a glaive. Unlike the glaive that I know, the tip is a blade as big as a great sword.

I also take out a holy sword from my storage. It'd be troubling if Claiomh Solais broke, so I

took out the sword with stable performance--Durandal. I had lent it to Arisa sometimes ago, but it came back when I exchanged it with an orichalcum holy sword. I've said it many times before, but this has good balance and is easy to use. Moreover, even if the blade is dulled, it'll be restored you put it in its sheath, so the maintenance is easy.
This independent holy sword isn't quite up to par to the legendary class divine holy sword, but I'm still uneasy using that to fight a demon lord.

"What are you up to? You've been using heroes' weapons for a while now, you're playing around too much. Do you think I'm not worth using your prided Dimensional Sword and Nihilistic Sword against?"

Those are some very dangerous sounding weapons. I absolutely don't want to meet mastermind-shi the demon lord is mistaking me for. Please make it 1000 years before I have to fight him. No, it's said that 1000 years is a miscalculation, so it'll be nice for it to happen after the Big Crunch.

"Then, let me show you some techniques that I want to use."

The demon lord produces seven colored light spheres around him. They feel similar to the forbidden spell that the hero's companions were going to use. I guess I should crush it with Magic Destruction before it can shoot it.

"First, the flame sword."

After thrusting his glaive onto the red sphere, the glaive's blade is melted, and one meter long flickering flame is formed on it.
I was going to block the demon lord who came attacking while moving like when Pochi used Flickering Movement with Durandal that had magic powered holy blade deployed on it, but in accordance to the Crisis Perception, I chose to avoid it instead of receiving it.

The Flexible Shield and Flexible Sword that I've used to block his blade are burning.
Shield and Swords formed from magic power are burning?

"I did have altered this blade with the concept of『Combustion』arranged, but to think that it burns your God Dancing Armor and Dragon Rending Sword!"

Looks like Mastermind-shi uses higher version of my Flexible Sword and Shield. I don't like it if our way of thinking are similar. He may even have completed magics that I tried to develop but stopped during the planning stage.
Oops, let's not jump to conclusion.

"For『All Things in Creation (Library)』unique skill that I've snatched from the Troll Demon Lord to be this wonderful, what a pleasant miscalculation."

He has snatched unique skills from other demon lords huh?
Judging from the talk about Arisa earlier, he probably snatched it from demon lords who have been killed.

Huh? Why didn't he snatch Arisa's unique skills?
Let's try asking in a slightly provocative tone.

"Fun, borrowed things from other demon lords huh. Couldn't you also snatch it from the girl earlier?"
"I know my own vessel well you know."

While answering my question, the demon lord stabs his glaive which has lost the [Combustion] effect toward the white sphere.
Looks like the white sphere has [Annihilation] effect.

"The seven unique skills that I have now should be the limit for this body. If I am to procure more than this, the god fragments will eat my ego, degenerating me into a mad demon lord."

I see, so you can't keep as many as you want huh. However, he has seven unique skills? The wild boar king had three, Arisa had two, and Zen spoke one, but judging from the content of the conversation, he should have at least 2-3. Even compared to me that has four, this demon lord has more by far.

I've decided to destroy all his spheres with [Explosion] magic when I block his glaive with Flexible Sword and Flexible Shield.

Stacking the Flexible Swords and Shields, I'm going to block the approaching white blade--No, it's impossible eh. The Flexible Swords and Shields disappear as soon as they get in contact with the white light. Even though they're strong enough to resist the black dragon Heiron's breath attack for a moment, it's not enough.
I let the demon lord to be the target of Explosion magic at that instant.

It seemed the demon lord had read it, he defended against the Explosion magic with the black curtain he created.
The black curtain is [Absolute Magic Defense (Anti-Magic)] in the AR's indication.

Oy, oy, won't he be invincible if he stacks it with the [Absolute Physical Defense (Anti-Physical)] from earlier. Even the Golden Wild Boar King only has 99% Physical Damage Cut, and 90% Magic Damage Cut; to be more than that like these, there's a limit even for cheat.

While expecting the demon lord not being able to use the two defense at the same time, I take out a Shotgun from my storage and shoot him. This buckshot is made with the same method as Holy Bolt; by over-filling it with magic power. I guess I should name it Holy Buckshot.

While the Holy Buckshots are being scattered away by the scaly multiple small shields that have appeared around the demon lord, they bore through the demon lord's lower half body, creating holes on it.
Apparently, the Anti-Magic and the Anti-Physical can't be used at the same time.

Even while losing the lower half of his body from the holy buckshots attack, the demon lord swings down his white light glaive toward me. I hit the substance part of the glaive with the

long spear made of adamantite taken from the storage, and got out of the trouble.

Even for an adamantite spear, the part that touches the white light has splendidly disappeared.
It might be a bit dangerous if he had a technique to shoot this light. I'm glad that its effect didn't spread to the substantive part.

"Fufufu, to think that you even use such an antique thing like a gun! Truly like the whimsical you."

Fumu, Last Boss-shi is a whimsical person.
I should destroy the remaining spheres with the holy buckshot since they're troublesome.

"However, I haven't been serious you know? I can do something like this if I use『Legion』, 『Library』, and also『Ruined Mind Madness (Berserker)』together."

The desert sand turns into demons with great momentum. Did he change the sand into seedbeds of demons with Library? The cheat is too much.
All of the giants that are made of the sand have the level of an intermediate demon class, and increased attack power by 300% added by their Berserk state. Glass-like sands are floating nearby them. It's most likely a countermeasure for my Laser.

Since it looks like it'll become troublesome if I wait for the opponents to finish their preparation, and it doesn't seem like I'll get materials from the giants made of sand, I decide to exterminate them all at once.
I move higher in the sky for a bit. The sand giants are throwing spears made from spiraling sand from the ground, but the Flexible Shield blocks the attack with no problem. One Flexible Shield disappear after taking five spears, it'll be annoying if their number increases.

In the sky, I put out sea water from the storage.
I use [Tsunami (Tidal Wave)] by using the seawater that's more than 100 school building much. Although the advanced level magic [Summon Tsunami (Summon Tidal Wave)] can be used anywhere, the intermediate one can only be used on the sea or a lake, somewhere near water source.

Some amount of the water is evaporated when it touch the hot sand, but the overwhelming mass crushes the sand giants.
Looks like they can't be defeated with just simple damage.

"Oh, as expected of The One who Rules Magic! To make a tsunami on the desert! It's not something that I could come up with!"

I feel like I'm subtly being made a fool of.
Continuing on, I use [Freeze Water] and [Icicle Field] toward the water, freezing the water, changing the sand giants into icicle skewers and shatter it. I thought that it wouldn't be effective since they were made of sands, but it looks like they've been defeated without problem.

For the sake of the next spell, I vaporize the ice with Flame Storm.
The evaporated water forms thick cloud in the sky. Flash of lightning leaks out of the gap of the swirling dark cloud in the sky, it feels like the last battle of Tenma.

The information is about enough, but I'll ask if he's interested in changing side.

"I'll ask you again for the last time, you don't have any intention of letting the temples go?"
"There is none. Destroying the temples, killing the priests and mikos, and snatching the believers are imperative to weaken the power of the gods. I need break the devout followers and the misconception that『Gods are the absolute good』in order to fight gods."

I wonder if the gods here are like in the Greece and Norse gods who do affair and irrational things?

"Why do you hate the gods so?"
"What are you asking so late now. They think the people of this planet only as a field to raise their own power and climb the rank of gods. If the civilization is developed to the point that it will trouble them, they instigate internal and external problem and smash it, and then cause severe calamity to make the people wish for gods. Even if you say that I'm taking it to the extreme, isn't it natural that you want to eliminate the incompetent omnipotents?"

Trusting the demon lord's words just like that is dangerous, but there are too many signs of it.
Science and growth should have been more developed if there were heroes and reincarnated people in the past. At the very least, it's too unnatural that there is no printing even though paper is really widespread. If there's not enough airship, then people should be able to create balloons or blimps, you can make a hot air balloon fly with just a single fire magician.

However, due to a sudden intruder, my conversation with the dog-head demon lord ended there.

Part 49 - Dog-Head Demon Lord (2)

Satou's here. I've read in some book that if there are two humans together, a quarrel will certainly happen. During my school days, I had been asked to mediate some fight between friend couple, but most cases were misunderstanding caused because the other party didn't hear the full story. Indeed, communications are important isn't it.

◇

"You shouldn't lend your ears to the demon lord's nonsense okay?"

The one that has suddenly appeared is a little girl of 5-6 years old unbecoming of this place.
The AR indicator shows only [UNKNOWN].
However, I feel like I've seen her face somewhere.

"Well I never, to think that you'd appear before myself! This isn't like the coward you--Parion!"

Is this little girl the god Parion who summons heroes?
The demon lord creates [Combustion] sphere like earlier, and then slashes the little girl with the transformed glaive.
The little girl burned out in an instant like she's made of a papercraft.

Huh? Are gods weak?

"You're being rude you know? My hero. I've created this figure in order to save you from the demon lord's cajolery you know?"

The little girl who has regenerated herself before I knew it rebukes me.
Don't tell me she reads my mind?

"My hero you said?"
"You be silent for a bit."

The demon lord gets imprisoned in a piece of picture that's appeared in the air.
I see, I thought that I had seen her from somewhere, she was the waving little girl inside the painting in the duke's mansion hallway.

"Looks like you've finally remembered."

Wait, if she was in contact with me at that time, that means she knows that Satou is the true identity of Nanashi?

"That's right, because I have always been beside you."

So the god is a stalker.

"That's terrible, please at least call me guardian spirit or guardian deity."

Please stop having a conversation with my mind's voice.
Oh, rather than that, there are other things I have to ask.

"God, are you inhibiting civilization like the demon lord's said?"
"I have no interest in people's business, at least for me. My only interest is only you always."

I feel like she's obfuscating something.
I have to press harder.

"Do you not manipulate humans' heart to stop them from popularizing things like printing or hot-air baloons?"
"A god who did that would be hurt you know? But, why would gods inhibit printing? What's the biggest bestseller in the earth? Remember and think about it."

Bestseller, it's that huh.
In that case, what's the objective of the god who's inhibiting.

"Then, don't you cause disasters, and gather believers from your own work?"
"I don't do it, but it seems to be getting popular among other gods. Since disaster adjustment seemed to be hard, along the way, gods who rule battles began to enjoy making their own believers to fight each other as their proxy."

The girl shrugs her shoulders like it's other people's problem.
It's certainly something that gods would have seemingly done, but it's mostly prank, and doesn't affirm what the demon lord's said isn't it?

"In addition, looks like they've become prudence ever since the demon god appeared. I mean even without us, the demon god causes the disasters called [Monsters] and [Demon Lords] in our place. The gods can live in comfort even without doing anything, they lead a leisurely life while basking in the flowing faith."

I feel that there's something odd. It's inconsistent with the legend about how the god Parion asked the dragon god to teach her the magic to summon hero. The truth might be different than the picture book though, so I'm awfully interested.

"Hear me? My hero. You are fine as yourself forever. Come to your usual strength, enough to stand beside me."

After telling that, the girl disappears like she's melted in the air.

◇

The demon lord who has broken out of the painting makes a come back.

"I've been thoroughly deceived, you god's watchdog!"
"Didn't you misunderstand on your own?"

Looks like he had a hard time inside the painting, he has injuries all over the place and unlike

his gentlemanly appearance before. His 180 centimeters body has seemingly also undergone two-fold transformation, changed into a five-meter tall giant werewolf. He looks like he's going to bite with his bare fangs at anytime.

"Hey, demon lord."
"Shut up watchdog!"

The flexible shield endures the disintegrating breath that the demon lord has vomited for only an instant before it disappears. It can only buy enough time for me to go outside of the breath's range with Flash Drive huh. I really can't protect against truly powerful attacks if I don't get the Chanting skill in order to use advanced level magic.

"Do you know the bestseller that's sold the most on earth?"
"Fuhn, it's Bible right? Or maybe you want me to say 'Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung' or 'Quran'?"

Yes, the book that benefits most from printing is the Bible as it helps spread its ideology.

"So you know, I wonder why are temples in this world don't hold political power like on earth."
"What are you--"

The demon lord was going to deny my doubt, but the thing I wanted to say had been transmitted.

Yes, if the purpose of the gods are gathering believers, it's strange for them not to spread religious country and priesthood country.
Shiga Kingdom and Saga Empire have freedom of religion since they're founded by Japanese people.

There should be countries backed by gods in a world where gods exist.
However, besides the Parion and Galeon Union, and the Tenion Republic, religious country doesn't exist. And, although every one of them is big enough to be a mid-sized country, they really can't be called large countries. They should have been bigger countries if they're backed by gods.
At the very least, a country with a god that can easily imprison a demon lord in a painting should be able to invade Shiga Kingdom easily.

And back to the argument, I don't think that gods have any motive to prevent the popularization of printing which can mass produce the sacred book, the most convenient way to propagate faith.

"In other words, you bastard are saying that the one who disturbs the progress of civilization is none other than myself!"
"There's a slight probability about other third party though. Maybe it's easier to understand if I say that the one who's hostile to gods disturbs the popularization?"
"Ridiculous..."

I wonder if he's persuaded now.

"Ridiculousssss, then what have I been doing? ....Was this long strife a mistake?!"

Ah, oops.

"Grrrrou, just for what sake, this hands killed the crying mikos noda? Killed the naive commoners who couldn't throw away their faithhhhhh"
"Calm down."

Ah, he won't calm down with that huh.
Apparently, I've also become slightly flustered.

"I am c a l m. Indeed I am calm, cool, and collected, the Demon Lord Origin nanoda!"

Aah, he's begun transforming.
Looks like the dog-head demon lord is changing from looking like a dog-man into the form of a beast, a demon dog. The gigantic demon dog with more than 100 meters overall-length barks toward the sky.
My words already can't reach him no matter what I say.

It can't be helped, let's thoroughly beat him and return him to his sense.

With Flash Drive, I shoot [Explosion] from 256 directions randomly, and mix Holy Buckshots shots at 16 directions. The topography has become quite dreadful, but it's sand anyway, they should be restored if the wind blows.
Furthermore, I strike him with 128 [Thunder] magic, summoned from the thundercloud.

Apparently, the demon lord has judged that the Holy Buckshots pose more threat than the magic.
He deploys the Anti-Physical to block the Holy Buckshot, and take the magic with multiple scaly small shields, and his countless followers. Some of the explosions break through the demon lord's defense, creating holes on his body.

The followers are coming attacking me while holding magic swords on their mouths, but I can easily dodge them as long as the demon lord himself doesn't come. Even if those magic swords have [Annihilation] effect from Library, there's no problem as long as they don't hit me.

While exterminating the followers and the demons that he's created, I'm beating him thoroughly to restore his sense, but the situation doesn't look favorable.
I overdid it once and killed him, but he was immediately revived like with the wild boar king. Demon lords are hard to deal after all.

"Kuha, kuhafuhahaha, this world can perish for all I care noda."

Ah, looks like he's snapped.
I guess it's better to kill him once again.

"Gods and humans and demons, they can all perish noda! 『God-devouring Wolf (Fenrir)』"

Wait a minute dog-head, please don't make this become honorable death or forced double suicide. Futhermore, since when were you a wolf.
The disintegrating light spread out with him as the center. The spreading speed is slow, but the desert is vanishing spherically.

I try to use [Break Magic] on it, but it seems to have different structure than magic as it disintegrate the [Break Magic] itself. Even when I try to snatch his magic power with [Mana Drain], the feeler is disintegrated to become mana, it doesn't go well.

This is slightly bad. Holy Buckshots and Laser were only getting swallowed by it, there wasn't any effect.
The Divine Sword can probably cut it, but considering the blade's length, it'd be over with my body disintegrating. I'm not into suicide, so let's think about other ways.

The light of disintegration speed slightly fell when it was disintegrating sand dunes. I tried to throw it large amount of debris and seawater from my storage to it, and its speed fell even further.

I guess that'll work?

I re-check the map again to see if anyone's here. Looks like there isn't anyone according to the map, maybe because this cataclysm has been going for a long time. There are some scarab-like and scorpion-like monsters, but it's not particularly a problem as long as there's no human damage.

I stow away the Durandal, and use magic while exchanging it with a magic sword that acts as a magic power tank.
While taking out seawater, I amass ice walls several kilometers around the demon lord who has stopped moving since he started swallowing the desert as the center.
Of course I don't think that this kind of things can stop the demon lord's Unique Skill.
After I've finished building the ice wall, I return-teleport to the hut on the mountain located at the verge of the desert.

And then, it came several minutes later.

Tearing apart the dark cloud--.

Trailing the light tail--.

Overwhelming masses strike the demon lord.

Meteor Shower--It once destroyed the Dragon Valley, the magic which slew the strongest Dragon God.

The disintegrating light hasn't disappeared even after getting battered by more than 100 meteors.

Un, it's within my expectation.

Stars fall toward the disintegrating light.
Even though it's broken, even though it's disintegrated, stars continue to fall.
After more than 1000 gigantic meteors downpouring onto the desert, the disintegrating light finally disappears in the bottom of the crater.

For the occasion, I used the stored magic power in the magic swords to rapidly invokes 10 Meteor Shower.

I've put the ice wall to prevent it from influencing the neighboring kingdoms, but it seems a little bit of sands have leaked out. Each kingdoms should be able to do something about it since it's just a little. It's way better than a raging demon lord.

>Title [Demon Lord Slayer『Dog-Head Ancient King』] Acquired
>Title [Favorite Child of Goddess] Acquired
>Title [Earth Splitting Magician] Acquired
>Title [Sky Tearing Magician] Acquired

◇

"He lost?"
"Because that guy's a nuisance."
"He's terrible isn't he."
"Au, it's painful?"
"Strange, I'm dizzy."
"Dizzy~"
"Let's go home? Lets go home."

I won't let you, you know?

I quickly eliminate the violet lights that have appeared in the bottom of crater gouged by the meteor shower, using the Divine Sword.
Due to observing it, this time I was able to confirm that the violet light had been absorbed by the Divine Sword. There is no change on the Divine Sword after all. Maybe it acts as some kind of sealing tool?

I felt some sense of guilt after destroying the dog-head demon lord, but I decided not to mind it.
He seems to be a demi-god, he's probably going to be revived on his own sooner or later. He probably won't have any unique skill left, but worrying about a demon lord is probably a waste of time. He might regain his sanity since the god's fragments had come off him.

Now then, I've disposed of the demon lord, and collected general information.
Let's go back to everyone as they're probably worried.

Perhaps, they might have even defeated the floormaster already.
Just in case, I put some vestiges of the meteor shower into my storage, and teleported to

the labyrinth.

This is from Arisa's POV.

Part 50 - Floor Master

Level 140?

Wait, dog-head demon lord? Lies, I don't know such--no, that's not something as simple as a demon lord.

Yes, that is something written down in the myth.
It's the god of death who burned down temples around the world, and consume the angels that had descended on the earth.

The Demon God's apostle who fought against the god's army and routed the heavenly dragons.

Why is such a thing in this place?
Perhaps, because of me?
I am....

He gently embraces my head that's looping with bad thought.
Un, that's right, we have to protect everyone.

I'll use Never Give Up and Over Boost together with all my power to expulse it to beyond the dimension.
I'll do it no matter how many times if it fails once.

The god who gave me this power said.
The usage limitation is my soul limiter.
Then I'm fine with using all my soul, I'd have loved to flirt and tease more, but if it's to save my beloved and everyone, it's a cheap thing to pay.

This world wasn't bad. I can die laughing now. If possible I'd like to be reincarnated beside this optimistic master in the next life.

Deep breath, unique skill activate--eh?

The spectacle suddenly changes.
Is this Pochi's Flickering Movement? I've been moved to where Nana and the others are in an instant.
There's no doubt my reckless master must be going to fight alone.

◇

I tried looking for master who had teleported with the demon lord, but I couldn't find him.
This can't be, I should've been able to quickly find someone I know well!

"Arisa, it's the floor master. Let's fall back at once."

By Liza's order, everyone evacuates to the safety zone behind.
I'm being carried on Liza's armpit like a baggage, but I don't have time to complain about such treatment. I use search magic with all my power, but I can't find him. I used [Over Boost] once with the search, but I still couldn't find him. It's as if [Satou] has disappeared from this world.

"No good, I can't find him."
"What is that earlier~?"
"It feels tingly like a demon nodesu!"
"No. It must be a demon lord."
"That?!"
"Is that true? Mia."

It looks like Mia understood.

"No need to worry~?"
"But, I'm worried nanodesu!"

Looks like Tama is the only one not worried. I wonder why does this child believe so much.
Even Lulu looks ghastly pale, and Liza and Nana are looking restless.

"Good grief, Tama is the only one who's calm huh. Take a deep breath!"

The masters who had come closer before I knew scolded us.

"Breath in, breath out, breath in, breath in, breath in."

I couldn't breath, and let it all out.
But, I think I've calmed down a bit.

"Good grief, I've said that the shield user has to always be calm right."
"I am sorry, so I apologize. I wasn't able to do anything while master in danger, so I self-analyze."
"Good grief, you know that Satou isn't someone who would choose to die honorably against someone he couldn't win right? He's the type that won't hesitate to run away if that guy wasn't someone he couldn't beat. Did you guys think that he left you because he thought you still couldn't fight a demon lord? Isn't it because he thought that he could easily win even without borrowing you guys' power?"

Uuh, it's not about the reasoning. My feeling wants to run after him!

"I've been forbidden to talk about this, but it should be fine with you guys. I saw Satou killed tens of thousands jellyfish in the void sky in an instant y'know? You'd have understood that worrying about him seemed silly if you saw that spectacle that looked like a joke."

So he was doing something like that when he talked about the pest extermination....
While listening to the masters' story and building my spirits up, shaking around 3 magnitude intermittently come.

"Shaking~?"
"Shakeshake nanodesu!"
"Kya, is, is it alright?"
"The labyrinth is sturdy. It won't collapse with just this much shaking, so I declared."
"I wonder if these shaking are from master and the demon lord's fight?"
"It's probably earthquake I think. There's a volcano nearby, so maybe that's erupting."

Or rather, this earthquake is long. It's enough to imagine how scary the epicenter is.

◇

"I'm back. Sorry for making you worry."
"Wlcome~"
"Welcome back nanodesu!"
""Master!""
"Satou."
"Master, blessing your safe return."

That guy came back as if he had just gone shopping.
When I asked what about the demon lord, he only plainly replied, "I defeated it." Defeated it, you, that easily. Well let alone injuries, his clothes aren't even torn though.

That was something that appeared in the myth you know?
Even though it's an existence that's even out of demon lord standard....

"Oh~, that's the floor master huh. What would you do? Do you want to challenge it another day?"
"We'll do it. Everyone is going right?"

It's is unthinkable to wait for another day!
I'm glad, everyone nodded too.

After declaring in rough excitement to him who was carefreely looking at the floormaster, I explained the plan to everyone.
We'll show that we are first-rate explorers!

The floormaster that has appeared is the Thunder Squid clad in red lighting on its body surface. It's level 59--not something we can't defeat. Its water magic and electric shock are troublesome, but the most dangerous one is its eyeballs. We should quickly smash them since they're charm evil eyes.
However, this floormaster is in easy win category among the assumed case. We're lucky that the one that came out wasn't something with physical annulment like the Flame Snake from the middle layer.

"Arisa, everyone is in their position, so I report."
"Okkey."

While we were taking our positions, the Thunder Squid was spreading pink-colored mist that

looked like cotton candy around it. I can hear crackling sounds from it, apparently it has electrifying effect.

If we assaulted it carelessly, we would be electrocuted, and then it's over.
We can't take it on half-heartedly even though it's an upper layer floormaster.

Pochi, Tama, and Liza who have scattered in three sides are waving here. Geez, what would you do if the floormaster found out.

"Mia, you can start preparing for the sand giant."
"Nn."

I release large quantity of sand that I've stored in the space magic [Garage].
With this sand as the material, Mia uses spirit magic to create an artificial life, [Sand Giant]. She can make it even without the sand, but the MP consumption decrease sharply if we prepare the material. I'm thinking of using the Sand Giant as the shield in the front since it's resistant to electric attack and physical blow.

The Thunder Squid has begun to move as a reaction to Mia's magic power,

Immediately, Liza who was standing-by in the opposite side of the hall struck the Thunder Squid's back with a stupidly big Magic Edge Cannon. The Thunder Squid changed its target from Mia to Liza while violently discharging electricity.

No well, it's certainly as planned, but oh Liza, you're putting too much fighting spirit into it.

Lulu who had put Pochi Tama under reinforcing magic came back here.
Lulu who's come as a substitute for our bodyguard changes with Nana who steps forward to the hall. It's still too early for the provocation. Nana drives five [Javelins] onto the Thunder Squid, changing its target.

Furthermore, Pochi and Tama mutually strike it from both sides with Magic Edge Cannon. Theirs are different than Liza's, the power is ordinary. Yes, it's good like that!

With the four attacking in turn, the Thunder Squid is getting confused to attack which one, the plan seems to be going well.
In games, ping-pong-ing the raid boss around like this does well.

The sand giant that has finally been completed slowly moves toward the Thunder Squid.
It's approaching the thunder squid with a calm face while absorbing the electric attack. Well, there's no such a thing like face on the sand giant though.

◇

After the sand giant had approached at a certain distance, the Thunder Squid unleashed a powerful lighting attack enough to split ears while posing in threatening manner.

Uwah, my ears hurt. I've protected my eyes with my hands, but my ears can't hear anything

but 'KIIN' sound. Next time, I'll ask for armors that can protect against sounds above certain level.

The sand giant calmly walk towards the Thunder Squid despite receiving such powerful electric attack. Yet, looks like its health has decreased by 30%. If it wasn't a lighting-resistance type, it might have been destroyed by the attack just now.

Akh, looks like Pochi has seen the attack head-on, she's crouching down while pressing her eyes. Since it seems like everyone's ears have been done in too, we have to gain some time.

"Are you alright Mia?"

She looks like she can't hear me but she understands my gesture, Mia nods.
Looks like she's fine. I instruct her with my hands to order the sand giant to attack.

The sand giant wrestles with the Thunder Squid. The Thunder Squid who doesn't seem to like it strikes the sand giant back with its tentacles, but they only go through the giant's sand body without affecting much.

The Thunder Squid which has become flustered since its attack isn't effective spits out ink-like poisonous spray in desperation, but it doesn't have any effect against the sand giant which doesn't breathe.

Alright, looks like the compatibility is better than I thought.

Part 51 - Floor Master (2)

We attack the Thunder Squid with my fire ball and Lulu's Javelin until Pochi's vision is restored.

It's not good. They're not going through, the squid has resisted them.

"Lulu, can you aim the bombardment at the squid's eyes?"
"Since Squid-san twists its body when it attacks, I might not be able to. I think I can hit it if it stops moving a bit more."
"'Pochi will do it nodesu!'"
"'Tama will dodo too~'"

The voices of energetic Pochi and Tama came in from the telephatic space magic, [Tactic Talk].
Eh? Pochi?

"Pochi, are your eyes alright?"
"'It's cured after I drank the potion nodesu!'"

No, normally that won't heal it you know?
Well, okay.

"Can you do it?"
"Leave it to me nanodesu!"
"Aye"

U~n, I'm afraid the Thunder Squid's will changes its target from the sand giant to Pochi and Tama. We can do something about it after the charm eyes are destroyed I guess.

Yosh, women must be brave!

"Then, please."
"Understood~" "Nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama each takes a swoosh pose, and then put magic power into their magic short swords with all their might.

"Strawberry taste~?"
"This one is the special jerky taste nanodesu!"

The two drank the MP recovery potions they took from their pouches.
Ugeh, how could she drink a beef jerky-tasted potion.

After timing the Thunder Squid's electric discharges, Pochi and Tama begin their assaults. Pochi who's quickly approached with Flickering Movement pierces the Thunder Squid's eye with the huge blade produced on the Orichalcum's sword. The Thunder Squid closes its eyes

from the pain.

"Not yet~, nanodesu!"

Ooh! She shoots Magic Edge Cannon while the sword is still stabbed, blowing the eye huh.... She uses quite a nasty technique even though she has a cute face.

"Whipswo~, un~, leash~"

Tama who's approaching from the opposite side stabs her whip sword that's been coated with Magic Edge. Next she shortens the whip sword and rides on the pulling force. I thought that it should be easy to slip out, but if I'm not mistaken, thorns can come out from the sword's tip. Tama is the same with the nastiness huh.
Tama who's drawing near thrusts the rotating blade Orichalcum sword with her other hand. To really use that joke weapon so well like that, the small girl is amazing.

Whoops, it's coming closer.

"Nana."
"You giant squid! Shine like a firefly squid if you think you're great, so I declare!"

Aah, if you provocate it like that.
The Thunder Squid's body surface glimmers and attacks Nana with a flash of light.

"Amazing."

Lulu holds her breath beside me.
Multiple magic shields and magic walls are floating with Nana in the center, protecting her. This is the second time I've seen this invoked, it has absurd defense power.

◇

Liza enters the match when the enemy's health has been reduced by half.

"Pochi, Tama, let's do the combo."
"Aye aye~"
"Roger nanodesu!"

Ooh! It's a combo technique!

"First sword nanodesu! Magic Edge Rush (Vorpal Lance)!"

Pochi assaults with Flickering Movement while having her whole body shining bright red. Aren't your assault nice, dog girl.

"Second sword~? Magic Edge Twin Fangs (Vanquish Fang)"

Tama produces huge fangs on both short swords on her hands. While revolving her body like a spinning top, Tama alternatively attacks with her swords, leaving bite-like wounds behind.

The Thunder Squid strikes with its tentacles out of desperation, but Tama splendidly evades it.
Enough with that acrobatic paper-thin difference evades! Leave that kind of thing to the masked assassin!

"Third arte. Magic Spear Dragon Expel Attack (Drag Buster)!"

Liza drives consecutive spear attacks on the Thunder Squid's back which has lost its defense membrane from Pochi's and Tama's attacks. In the end she revolves her body, and rides the force to do a single blow. That blow has penetrated the Thunder Fish's body's which has been shredded by the consecutive attacks.

Liza crunches the MP recovery potion she holds on her mouth and drinks it.
Her MP which was about to dry up recovers in an instant. Geez, the amount of recovery is the same as with a high grade potion.

"Over Arte. Magic Edge Explosion."

I saw many red lights flickering from inside the Thunder Squid.
Red edges which tear out the squid's rind from the inside appear here and there.

The squid's tentacles are approaching Liza from both sides.

"Are those arms, or are those legs, make it clear, so I condemn!"

Nana who has used body reinforcement magic cuts herself with inhumane speed between Liza and the tentacles.
She blocks one side of the tentacle with her great shield, while stopping the tentacle on the other side with a floating magic shield.

Everyone is amazing.

The Thunder Squid's health is below 40% now.

◇

"Arisa, it's about time."
"OK."

The sand giant that Mia manipulates crumbles after losing all its health.
There, I use [Labyrinth] magic to buy us some time. It can only keep it for 30 seconds at most, but it's enough isn't it.

I can smell honey drifting from Mia who's drinking an MP recovery potion beside me. It's honey taste for this child huh. Everyone's asked to change the potion according to their preference eh.

This time, the sand snake that's been created from the crumbled sand constricts the

Thunder Squid.

"Lulu, start the preparation."
"Un, okay."

I prompts Lulu who has supported everyone with magic to start the preparation.

I also restrict the Thunder Squid's movement with space magic.
However, my aim isn't the Thunder Squid. It would resist if I directly aim on it wouldn't it.

I aim at the sand snake constricting the Thunder Squid. Stopping the sand snake indirectly restricts the Thunder Squid.
I take the MP recovery potion from the pouch and gulp it in one sitting. Bitter.

Its health should be under 30% if Lulu's accelerated bullet hit. Before it enters the Rage (Stampede) state, I will use the big magic [Space Annihilation (Disintegration)] while using all my unique skills and end it in one go.

Lulu sets up the smoothbore gun she has taken from her pouch.
I nodded to Lulu who asked with her eyes and gave her the GO sign.

"Finished aiming. Secure."
『Yes my lady, Dimension Pile stand by』

Support sounds from the smoothbore guns answers Lulu's order.
The invisible dimensional stake secures the heavy smoothbore gun in the air.

"Spread out the virtual barrel."
『OK, Virtual Barrel spread』

20 meter-long force gun barrel is expanded in front of the smoothbore gun.
Kuh, I'm burning up!

"Acceleration magic circle, limiter release."
『Aye aye ma'am, battery full charge』

The magic cylinders attached on the smoothbore gun are being filled with magic power in order to create magic circles.
Huh? It's usually enough with one, but aren't all the cylinders including the spare one used this time?

『Acceleration Over Drive』

Red magic circles are being deployed alongside the virtual barrel--wait, why so many!

Huh? Weren't there supposed to be only three magic circles?
Aren't there 100 of it coming out?

"Preparation complete! Arisa?"

Lulu who had finished the preparation asked for the timing. Of course it's a GO.
I order her to shoot while pointing at the Thunder Squid.

"Shoot!"
『Ignition!』

Lulu pulls the trigger with her small finger, and then the shell is fired.

BOMBOOM, Lulu's smoothbore gun is shot while leaving blue trails and earsplitting explosive sound.

Eh? It's a substance bullet right?
Why is it like laser?

Uwaah, there's a huge hole opened on the Thunder Squid's body with just that one attack.

The part around the big hole is gouged inward, you can see behind the Thunder Squid through it. Finally, the Thunder Squid is shredded into slices by the hardened sand snake.

Geh, isn't the labyrinth floor hollowed in straight line until the end wall!
Right then, I heard the voice of our carefree master.

"Mach 20 really is amazing isn't it."

Mach? By 20 that means exceeding the speed of sound by 20 times?!
Restrain yourself a bit more hey!

But I'm too shocked, I can only let out stupid words like au au from my mouth.

"No well, I heard that railgun was 20 mach, so that smoothbore gun is the result of me trying out whether it can be materialized with magic you see."

That explains why there's no rifling.

"Arisa~"
"Let's do the victory pose!"

Eh? It's over with just now?
Lies? My turn is.
I haven't used that unique skill yet.

My hands are pulled by Pochi and Tama toward the center of the hall where the treasure chest appears, and then we take the commemoration photograph in victory poses. We took the second one with our masters together.

Thus, we obtained the Mithril Plate.

Intermission: Mochi Pounding

Satou's here. Speaking of new year's day, it's all about new year's food, mochi, and new year's gifts. Shrine visit and new year's card are also the standard of new year. As a child, I ran to buy toys and games while grasping the new year's gift tightly, but I only remember lazying around with sake when I had become an adult. Work? There's no work during the new year's day you know?

◇

"Arisa's cheeks sure can stretch like mochi."
"Oufh, refease, mfee--"

I wonder how are they this springy even though they're thin.

"What is mochi nanodesu?"
"Stretch~?"

Pochi and Tama who caught notice of 'mochi' word came asking.

"Mochi you see, is--"
"Umm, master, please Arisa's punishment is..."

Lulu interceded reservedly when I was going to explain about mochi. When I look below, Arisa is looking up with teary eyes. Sorry, I forgot.

◇

I immediately prepare the wooden mallet, and the traditional mortar for mochi making. Unfortunately the glutinous rice has to be soaked in the water for one night, so we can't pound the mochi right away.
Even though there are ripening magics, there's no magic to speed up mochi soaking, I think magician bunch are negligent.

It's probably of water type magic, I'll try experimenting some things tonight.
Mia seems hesitant since she doesn't like memorizing, but if I let her eat some delicious mochis, she will most certainly help in making the magic for the sake of easier mochi-making.

The azuki beans and black soy beans for the mochi fillings also have to be soaked in the water for a night. I've already mass produced red bean jam for the muno roll back then, but I can't use it unless for mochi daifuku.

I continue preparing the ingredients while thinking about more ideas.
Adding things like cheese or strawberry sounds good other than traditional Japanese ones.

That's right, for this occasion I should try preparing various odd ones.

Since I don't know which ingredients would be well received after all.

◇

"Flat~"
"Flat nanodesu!"

When I was making the mochi, Pochi and Tama wanted to do it too, so I changed with them. Nana is in charge of flipping the mochi beside them.

"Me too! I want to flip it over too!"
"Alright, you can change with me so use these."

Since Arisa and Mia looked interested in trying, I gave them thin gloves.

"Hm? What's with the gloves?"
"Your wrist would break if the mallet swung by Pochi and Tama hit it you know? These gloves are the same things Lulu used in the labyrinth, so it would produce a small magic shield to guard against the hit."

Its mainly to prevent the mochi from sticking though, however they probably won't be careful I don't make this much threat.
I can heal them in an instant even if they get hurt badly, but we wouldn't be able to eat the pink-colored blood mochi after all.

While watching Arisa and Mia who are nervously flipping the mochi, Lulu and I make the mochi into round shapes. We put the fillings that have been prepared beforehand during this process.
The little girl maids from the mansion are also helping rounding the mochi.

"Achichi, it's amazing that Lulu-sama and master-sama look fine."
"Ufufu, it'll be fine if you dip your hands on cold water beforehand you know."
"Uh, my hands are sticky."
"If you put this flour on your hand beforehand, it won't get sticky."

Well it is hot, but it's nothing compared to when I put my hand in the forge.
I continue working while feeling heartwarming from watching Lulu helping the little girl maids.

"Pochi-!"
"Tama~"
"Achichi, the mochi is the mochi isss"
"Arisa."

When I look at the noisy screams, it seems that Pochi has failed something due to strange action she did during the mochi making. Apparently, the mochi on the mallet has coiled on her body.
Beside her, Arisa who has been covered in mochi from her head down looks terrible.

Lulu goes there to control the situation while saying some wife-like thing, "Ara ara, my my." Their burns are healed with Mia's water magic, and the dirts are cleaned with Lulu's life magic, but Pochi who was doing careless thing with food and Arisa who instigated her are being made to do seiza and scolded by Liza.

◇

Large quantity of mochi in four types, plain, sweet, staple and colored are lined up full on display.
I might've made a bit too much.

I guess I can just give the excess to the orphanage and the training school.

"Delish. Freshly made mochi is the best after all."
"Strethetch~?"
"Mo, mochi person is tough nodesu. It's sticking on my mouth~"
"Delicious."

The youth troupe are enjoying the freshly made plain mochi.

"That's right! Mochi has to be roasted!"
"Liza is already fetching the tool now."

I calm Arisa who's stressing with mochi on one hand.

"There's guga in this mochi."
"It's smooth anko here nodesu!"
"Beans are delicious too~?"
"Nn, honey mochi, good."
"Ah, I'm full before the grill came--honey?!"

Arisa looks at me while eating the mochi, looks like she has something to say.
Honey mochi is a mochi that puts out thick honey when you chew them. If you chew on them further, the honey mixed with mochi tastes unexpectedly good. It's a bit too sweet, so I feel I've had enough with one.

"This one has cubed meat in it nodesu!"
"Here is teriyaki chicken~"
"Nn, custard."

Most of them seems to be popular.

Oh? Arisa falls prostrating on the ground like orz.
Did she have a heartburn?

"What's wrong?"
"J, Japan's culture is remodeled."

You're exaggerating.
Food is something that's always evolving.

"Here comes one for the conservative Arisa."

I point at Liza who's come carrying false-brazier magic tool and wire mesh.
Arisa who's revived immediately puts the mochi on the mesh and begins the roasting.
Since the mochi didn't swell well, I tried doing various things like drying the surface, or adding cut on the surface.

"The mochi is alive nodesu!"
"Pukupuku~?"
"Slime?"

The youth troupe can't take their eyes off the swelling mochi on top of the mesh. Yup, it's worth the hardship.
Even though she's feigning to be calm, Liza's eyes has been chasing after the mochi since awhile ago.
I guess it's about time?

I hand the plate with poured soy sauce to Arisa.

"Kuh~ really, eating mochi has to be like this after all~"

However, it seems that the only people who enjoy the conservative soy sauced roasted mochi are Arisa and me, the other members are more receptive to the other mochis which I've prepared in jest.

"Cheese~ Can see the inside~?"
"This mochi is hiding the hamburg sensei nodesu!"
"Caramel taste."
"This teriyakimayo tastes wonderful. The teriyaki taste is mixed with the mochi when I chew on it, it's as if I'm eating another kind of meat texture--"

Well, it's alright so long they like it.
I bite the soy flour covered mochi while looking at everyone who looks happy.
Right, I'll challenge myself by making mugwort mochi and green bean mochi next time. Having cherry leaf mochi during the Kingdom Spring Conference sounds good too.

"Oh, looks like the zenzai is complete."

The pot with zenzai inside is being brought out from the kitchen by Lulu.
The mansion maids unit are following behind her while carrying the tablewares.

"Ah, the combo of salty-sweet mochi with the zenzai is dangerous! They can be connected even while hot, creating the infinite combo! I'm so happy it's scary!"
"Mochi scary~"
"Zenzai is also scary nodesu!"

While thanking Lulu and the maids unit, I add another new mochi for the girls.

While eating the zenzai, Ms. Miteruna whom I'm always troubling with, and princess Mitia with her maid have also mixed in, they're amazed with the sweet mochi that Mia's recommended, passing the enjoyable time.

After the party had ended, Nana carried the case with a lot of sweet mochis and went to share them to the orphanage. She must be watching over the young organisms and the mochi right now.

◇

In the future, I ended up having to distribute mochis to my labyrinth city acquaintances who knew about this mochi party.
The little girl maids and the orphanage teachers who knew about the price of glutinous rice in the labyrinth city looked like the were going to faint. They're cheap though?

After eating the mochi, Arisa pestered me that she wanted to eat the food served in new year day, but unfortunately, I didn't know the recipe at all so I couldn't reproduce it.
I was good at sampling the new year food that my mother and grandmother made though.

Intermission: Pochi and Tama's Part Time Job

"Oy, you there! Come with us, we're hiring you."

"We don't need it nodesu. Besides we're in break today nanodesu."

"Don't be cheeky after the trouble of me inviting you."

"Forceful~ is no good~?"

Some dogkin children called us when I was playing with Pochi. He seemed arrogant even though we look the same age.

"I'm sorry. This guy has a bad mouth."
"Gon is a hopeless guy who can't help but speak meanly with cute girls. Forgive him. My name is Ken, this tall one here is Han."
"The heck you two."

From big to small it's Han, Gon, and Ken. The three of them are dogkin boys.

"I was called cute nodesu."
"Pochi is cute~"

Pochi is cute. However, these three boys look somewhat dirty, not cute.

"How about it? I can't pay you daily, but if you properly carry our baggages, I'll treat you to a meal."
"Meal!　Meat nanodesu?"
"Meat~?"

Master's said that he's doing barbecue today. I'm looking forward to it now.

"Alright. We are men. We're going to splurge on meat today!"
"Yay-, nanodesu!"
"Is that alright, Ken. Making a promise like that."
"Acting cool alone."

Before we knew it, we've gone to the labyrinth to carry baggage for the three. I can't let Pochi go alone. Because I'm the onee-chan after all.

◇

"Gon, get back, it's dangerous to be in the front alone."
"Hehe~n, as if I'm scared of one goblin."
"Wait, Gon, Ken. The baggage carrier girls won't catch up with us if we rush."

I exchange a look with Pochi. We're only carrying the Hopping Potato the three have defeated just now in the big bag, so we're alright.

"We're alright nanodesu."
"Piece of cake~?"
"Is, is that so."

The tall Han is breathing roughly. Are you alright?

"Uwah, two of them appear from the shadow. Han, you take care of one. Ken, handle two of them until I defeat it."
"Okay. This looks like a hard fight."

The three boys jump out toward the goblins who are 'kii kii'-ing.
I'd like to cover them by throwing stones, but since they said, "Don't throw stones from the back" when we entered the labyrinth, I won't throw.

That's why, I'll cheer.

"Do your best~?"
"Do your best nanodesu!"
""""YEAH!""""

The blood comes out dripdrip when the goblin bites, it looks really painful. Pochi covers her eyes with her palms, looks like she can't watch it.

"Need help~?"
"I'm, all, right!　Don't worry."

He doesn't look really alright.

"Oy, the dogkins over there! Do you need help?"
"Thanks! Please take care the two of them."

Eh~, he just said that he didn't need help.
They obediently asked for help when another explorers came. It's a bit complicated.

"Understood!　Usasa, get the one on the right."
"Yes!"

Oh?　It's Usasa and Rabibi. They're Pendragon Training School's graduates. I greet them with 'Shupin' pose.

Uuh, no one notices it.

"Amazing, they defeated one in an instant."
"Don't you know?　They're『Pendora』. They're elite graduates who wear the blue mantles."

The dogkin boys defeated the decreased goblins while bleeding. It looks really painful. Pochi

stops their bleeding with bandages.

"Thank you very much."
"Don't mind it, we help each other in time of need--eh?"

Ah, Usasa finally notices. I greet them once again, this time with 'Shutan' pose.

"Eh? Tama and Pochi Nee-san? What are you two doing in a place like this."
"Part time job~?"
"We're in the middle of working as baggage carriers!"

Usasa's face looks strange. Do you have a stomachache?

"You two, do you know the『Pendora』?"
"Iyes~"
"We know and we're buddies nodesu!"

Ah, there's a goblin.

Swoosh, I move, and defeat it swiftly with the short sword taken from the pouch. Goblin Assassin is dangerous since it can get close to you before you know it.

"Eh? Tama-chan disappears?"
"Ah, there!"

I wave my hand toward Rabibi who's noticed.

"To notice that approaching Goblin Assassin!"
"Concentratehe~"

It's dangerous if you're not careful you know?

"Where did that sword come?"
"You lose if you mind it~"
"Is, is that so."

Huh? Something is vibrating the ground?

"Tama, something is coming nodesu."
"Communicastone~?"

This vibration is from six feet. Because it's 'Dota, dota tatta', it's a Soldier Mantis or a Steel Ant I think?
The footsteps feel a bit wide so it should be a Soldier Mantis.

"Probably, a Soldier Mantis footsteps~?"
"As expected of Tama nanodesu! It must be right nodesu."

But, everyone looks strange. I wonder if I'm wrong?

"What should we do~?"
"Pochi-san, and Tama-san, why are you two so calm!"
"It'll be a different story if there are five of you, but you can't possibly win against it with a casual short sword!"

Really? Soldier Mantis is weak isn't it? Isn't it?
Pochi also looks puzzled.

Everyone embraces each other and trembles, "what do we do?", while looking pale. If you can't win, you'd better run you know?

"You guys run, the mantis bastard is coming!"

Four men and women ran through us.

Ah~ not~ good~
Train is no good, absolutely!

"Ye, yes, we have to run."
"Run, quickly get up. Gon, help me. Han, you carry the two. Pochi-chan, and Tama-chan, don't stand around, let's run together."

You won't defeat it?

"I'll defeat it nodesu!"
"Okey~"

Only one Soldier Mantis appears from the corner. I match my eyes with Pochi's and nod.

"Pochi~"
"Tama~"

The two of us fill magic power into our short swords.

"Magic Edge" "Go~" "Nanodesu!"

While leaving red trail of light like Liza, Pochi and I cut the Soldier Mantis's forelegs, swoosh swoosh. The short swords easily cut the joints of the legs.

After cutting the legs, I make a sudden stop and turn around.
This time I climb the fallen Soldier Mantis's back, and swiftly cut the fragile neck.

Tei.

"Vic~ tory~" "Nanodesu!"

The two of us take the victory pose.

◇

Since the Soldier Mantis's meat isn't too delicious, I'm not too happy.

With Usasa's and Rabibi's help, we brought back the Soldier Mantis's core. Since we got a lot of gold coins from the staff onee-san in the labyrinth entrance, everyone ate a lot a lot of meat.

Of course with the dogkin boys, together.
The frog meat skewers we've bought from the stall, are really delicious.

"We will become strong like you two and show you someday."
"I won't lose nodesu!"

Pochi has begin eating the skewers energetically so she won't lose to the boys. There's another stomach for meat, but if you eat too much, you won't be able to meat master's dinner you know~?

The barbecue for the dinner was invincible and the strongest. Circle.

SS: First Carbonated Water

I'm having a break today since I've been working without one for half a month.

I indulge myself in inactivity on the self-made deck under the tree's shade in the courtyard.

Still, I begin to crave for carbonated drink when it's this hot. There should be some carbonated water remaining if I'm not mistaken. I start preparing the beverages after asking Lulu to fry some potato chips. I add grape juice to the carbonated water, making it look like sparkling wine. I also add more sugar since I feel it's not sweet enough.

With Liza's help, I brought the potato chips and the carbonated grape juice to the place where everyone is playing learning cards.

"Bubbly bubble~?"
"Even though it's sweet and delicious, the bubbly bubble is bursting nodesu!"
"Kuh~ It's been awhile since I've had carbonated water~ If possible I'd have liked to drink Professor Pepper~"

The three who are simply delighted, and the children who are hardened. There was also a child who dropped the goblet, but Tama skillfully caught it.

"Hau, it's tizzling"
"?!"
"Hiccup."

There's also a child who can't stop hiccuping, it's quite a success.

"This is the specialty product of the grapevine mountain range right?"
"You know well. I've got it from an acquaintance. I thought of enjoying it with everyone since it was unusual."

Ms. Miteruna knew about the carbonated water since she was treated to it once when she was little by the previous Viscount Shimen. According to her, carbonated water is extremely expensive in the labyrinth city. It's not produced around this area, on top of that since it has to be carried in airtight containers to prevent the carbonated acid from coming off, there are a lot of cases where the containers explode during the transportation, so it rarely arrives here. Looks like it worths one gold coin for one cup. The children hardened when they heard that story, but Arisa persuaded them, "If you don't drink it and let time pass, it will become a normal water, so go on and drink it."

The potato chips seem to go too well with the sweet carbonated water, the chip plate is emptied in the blink of an eye. Lulu told the children who're licking the potato chips powder on their fingers, "Let's make some more okay."

Later on, I came to understand that it was easy to extract the carbonated water with

alchemy. It was fast since I remembered that some liquor like ale contained a minute amount of carbonated water. Of course the local alchemists knew about, but it seemed no one did it since there was no meaning in extracting the carbonated water from it.

It looks like it could become a new specialty product if I just can cheaply extract the carbonated water.
I dream of such a future while staring at the bursting bubbles in the glass.

It was one week later that I knew there's a place where carbonated water gushed out in the middle layer of the labyrinth.

SS: Fortunate Children

I lightly poke the three lumps in the darkness of the back alley with a stick. Completely lightly.

Since two of them moved while replying with muffled voice, they're still alive. The problem is the last one.

I sent a glance to my pal if he could change with me, but he jerks his chin to urge me continue the work, doesn't seem like he'll help. Since I've debt for meals, can't be helped.

It's fine if you die, but please don't be decomposed already.
I lift up the brat's face with the stick.

The mouth moved slightly, but there's probably no hope for the brat.

"How 'bout it?"
"It lives."

My next patrol will be in 10 days, it would've been decomposed by that time. I'm not a demon, so I can't kill it here and now either. Maybe I should ask boss to send me to another group for three days.

"Let's get out, it's depressing here."
"You're right."

When I pulled the stick from the brat's chin and turned around, someone was there.
Its eyes are glittering from the dark.
Eyes full of vitality that're obviously different from the lifeless ones the brat just now has.

"What are you doing nodesu? Are you bullying small children nodesu?"
"N, no."

I unintentionally stuttered.
Weird, I banter with ruffians all the time just fine.

"We're the sentry corps of the viceroy."
"Sen-try? Police officers nanodesu! Amazing nodesu!"
"Yes, that's right. We're amazing."

Dunno what the heck is police officer, but I'll suitably reply to make her scram.
Even if this guy gives food to these brats, it'll probably only make them die faster.

"Are these children sick nanodesu?"

The one who came out of the dark is a dogkin little girl. Wearing such an expensive looking clothes although she's just a demi-human. She must be a slave of some perverted noble.

Would love to let my daughter wear something like that even once.

"They're dying from hunger. They're probably going to survive if they're bought by a rich merchant or noble like you."
"Hunger is painful nodesu! Hungry is sad nodesu!"

The dogkin little girl who's suddenly appeared takes out some kind of flute from her bag and blows it with all her might. I unintentionally covered my ears, but there weren't any sound coming from it.

"Master! Pochi is here nanodesu!"

The dogkin little girl who's finished blowing the flute begins to call her master with loud voice.
Damn loud voice.

"It's terrible nanodesu! Please help nodesu!"

While putting her hands beside her face, she raises her voice to the limit.
Oy, oy, you're alright? Something wrong with this brat's head?

"Oy, let's go."
"You're right."

My co-worker's tilting his head like remembering something, but I don't want to get involved in trouble.

The gust of wind that suddenly blew scrambled the sand on the back alley.
Tsk, can't breath. It's gritty in my mouth.

"Pochi, what's wrong. Did these guys bully you?"
"I-it's not that nodesu! These people are police officers-san nanodesu. It's not that nodesu, come here quick nanodesu. Stomachs are empty, they're going to die nodesu!"

T, this guy, when the heck he appeared.

"Oy, where did you come--"

Ouch~.
Looks like my co-worker hit me with a stick from behind. Can't speak from the excessive pain.

"I'm sorry Chevalier Pendragon-sama. My co-worker is being rude."
"No, please excuse me too."

There's no need to be that servile just because he's some noble young master right?
The noble-sama is led by the dog little girl's hand to the dying brats. After ascertaining that, I complain to my pal.

"What the hell man."
"That's my line. Don't you know who is he?"

Always making fun of me, fuhn, it's Pendragon right. Pendragon?
Can't be?

"Don't tell me, the master of the maid who defeated the lost thief king?"
"What kind of way to remember's that--well fine. That's the man. Incidentally, he's also the Marchioness's favorite, and competent enough to defeat a lower-class demon in some distant land. His maid was enough to deal with something like a lost thief king."

Fuh, I was close to lose my neck in more than one meaning.

"Chevalier-sama, what are you doing? Just in case, euthanasia is prohibited in the kingdom's law."
"You're mistaken. I'm only giving them nutritional magic potions."

Nutritional? Rather, magic potions? He's giving several silver coins worth of magic potion to these dying brats? You can live for half a year with that much! These nobles' hobby.... geez.

"They're moving nodesu!"
"Yeah, let's entrust them to Ms. Miteruna after this. I'm planning to take these children, is there any procedure for it?"

Toys for a perverted noble huh. It's pitiful, but still 100 times better than dying here.

"No, we're going to report it to our superior, so you can just take them now. If you prefer, would you like our help?"

Oy oy, pal-chan? What the hell're you saying?

"No, it's fine. Pochi, Tama, carry the two over there gently."
"Yes, nanodesu!"
"Aye~"

Thankfully the noble-sama declined and I don't have to do annoying stuff.
What?! Since when did this catkin brat appear?

My co-worker claps my shoulder as if consoling me.
Dunno what you're doing, but it's pissing me, don't sympathize with me!

After that day, I never see dying brats in the back alley again. The old people who looked like they were going to die loitering around the park near the ivy mansion have also disappeared. I dunno whether someone collected the corpses, or the dying people decreased.

One thing I can say, I feel better that the job of collecting corpses has disappeared.

◇

Half a month later, three unfamiliar little girls came to my station and gave their thanks.
I dunno any little girl with those nice clothings though?

My pal and me eat the cookings left by the little girls.
Yup, good food has no sin.

SS: Daily Life of Explorers [Ant Wing Silver Sword]

"Sup~, is the boss here?"

"Sumina! You're still alive."

The weapon shop proprietress celebrates my safe return while crying. To be frank, I didn't think that she'd remember someone poor like me. Even though I've known them for 10 years, I'm not a good customers in the least. I've only bought six weapons during these 10 years. Like when I bought my first spear, I didn't have enough money so I had to make up for it by working as the forge lookout for half a month. I didn't know how to maintain my weapons so I regularly came here, they probably remembered me due to that.

"Oh, just when I'm wondering who, it's the snapping turtle little girl."
"I can't be called little girl anymore with my age you know. I'm already at an age said to be a woman who's missed her chance to marry."

I corrected the boss who came out from the back while saying some rude nickname. It's sinked on me that I'm already 27, so I know I've missed my chance. Wonder if Kuro-sama would make me his mistress.

"What's happened today? You're not here to only report something grievous like your safe return right?"

The boss is rude like always, but he's right on the mark.

"Hehehe, boss knows everything don't you."
"I don't know no everything."

Don't look bashful you 50 years old man.

"About it, I want you to teach me how to maintain this sword."

I pull out the sword on my waist and show it to the boss. This is the magic sword I've got from Kuro-sama, the [Ant Wing Silver Sword]. It's a transparent silver sword that can become scary sharp when I fill it with magic power. Even compared to the black iron sword I've got from the boss back then, it's many times sharper. I mean, It can even easily cut the shell of that excessively hard ant.

"Oy, Sumina. Where'd you get this sword."

The boss is staring at the silver sword with face so serious it's scary.

"What's wrong?"
"Just answer it."

Wonder why, his voice is more tense than when he's working. Not like I was trying to hide it, so I answered honestly, "I got it from Kuro-sama."

"Did that guy make this sword?"
"I don't know who made it."
"That so."
"Didn't the boss make one before?"
"The sword I made was the Ant Wing Silver Sword, but it wasn't the Ant Wing Silver Sword."

The boss said some doubtful question and answer-like thing.
He's not gone senile yet right?

"The color wasn't as this beautiful as this silver was it?"
"That's right. Ant Wing Silver Sword is expensive, but the way to make it is well-known. There are 10 stores that can make it even in this labyrinth city alone. It's something that's relatively wide-spread for a magic sword."

Figure.

"However they are all gray swords. None is like this beautiful silver."
"Fuh~n?"
"Temperature control is the most important thing for Ant Wing Silver Sword making. If the temperature slips even for several degrees during the sword dipping in the liquid medicine until it's adhered, it'll turn black and useless. It's been told that a long long time ago, the silver sword made by the Sage-sama who taught the way to make this magic sword was of the transparent silver color. Maybe this is something left behind by the Sage-sama?"

Elderly people's talk is really long.

"It's not? I mean, the sword was brand new when I got it you know? Let alone chip, there wasn't even a scratch on it."

There's a slight scratch now though. The labyrinth ant's hard see.

"Is that so.... Sumina, do you mind selling this sword? I'll pay you 100 gold coins. I'll even let you use the mantis great sword I've made."

Geh? 100 gold coins? Furthermore, wasn't that greatsword the boss's masterpiece which he boasted he wouldn't sell no matter how much.

"Sorry boss. That sword is something I got from my respected benefactor. I won't yield even if it's boss's request."

I won't be able to face Kuro-sama if I sell this sword.

"Kuh, can't be helped if that's the story. However, absolutely come to this shop when you need to repair this sword. I'll repair it carefully with my own hands. Of course it's free."

Oh, amazing.

"Thanks boss. But I'll be needing to maintain it after fighting in the labyrinth, so would you teach me the minimum care?"
"Ya bet. I'll strictly teach you til' morning. Don't think you can sleep tonight."

I took the Ant Wing Silver Sword from the boss who was holding it like a treasure, and went to the store's back. It really wasn't until morning that the boss approved my way of maintaining the sword.

I'll become an explorer that won't disgrace this silver sword I've got from Kuro-sama.
I don't plan to aim at such a foolish target like Mithril, but at least Red Iron Plate, enough that Kuro-sama won't regret giving me the silver sword--I want to become such an explorer.

I vow so to my dear sword glittering from the morning sun.
As if answering my thought, the silver sword glitters brightly for an instant.

SS: Tama's Stroll

"Ninja is~ Gake~"

I run on the back alley and on top of the wall, wearing the ninja costume that master's made for me.
Tama won't be find out by anyone. Because she's a ninja.

I peer into the irrigation canal from the bridge.

I can see small prawns in the bottom of the pure water. Look delicious. My hands involuntarily reach to the water surface--

Ha!?

That was close.
There's a lot of dangerous things in the irrigation channel nyan. Wrong. A lot of dangers degozaru. Or was it gozansu~?
Either way's fine nyan. I look at my appearance on the canal's water surface, pink really is better than black after all. Ninjas' attire has to be black! So Arisa said, but still, I asked master to make it pink after all.

I mean, that one's cuter.

"From gake to gakeee~"

Gake? Or was it kage? I guess either's fine~
Pyon, pyon, pyon, running through the rooftops.

『No, stop it!』
『Shut up you wench?!』

I look at the back alley since I heard a scream.
Mumumwu. A man is assaulting a woman, tearing her clothes! The woman seems sad since her clothes've been torn, she's beating the man while crying. Ah, her hands are caught, and then she's thrown on the ground.

I must help.

"Tenshi! Chisi! Miracurun! Tama the mysterious ninja appears!"

Ah, I said my name.
Well, it's fine.

Toward the man who's saying something from the ground, I headlock throw his head, "Eiya!" and make him faint. It's a technique Shiya's taught me, it has to be done well or the opponent'll die. If it's samurai, she'll be full-fledged after mastering taijutsu was it?

His eyes are white it's gross, but since he's twitching, he's alive right?

"Umm, thank you?"
"You're welcome~? Nin nin degozaru~"

Yes, Arisa's taught me that 'Nin nin' and 'gozaru' are important for ninjas.
In addition, ninjas have to leave immediately after saving someone or it's not good. It the destiny of one who lives in darkness.

"Sabara, degozaru~?"

I throw a smoke ball down my feet, slipping into the smoke to ju~mp onto the roof. Come to think of it, Arisa's said that ninjas use katana to jump, but I wonder how do they do that? They can just jump normally if it's to a roof.

Ah, this time an old man is being bullied over there. I must go save him.
Wait for me old man, I'll save you immediately.

When I come back to the mansion, Tama will have master listen to her activities from his lap~
--Degozaru.

Previous Chapter

DIntermission: The Adventure of Ninja Tama

I check the pink ninja clothes that Master's made for me in front of the mirror.

Un, cute~

I wanted to show off to Pochi, but I couldn't find her anywhere.
Seems she's gone playing first thing in the morning~

"Tama-chan, here are your lunch box and snacks for today."
"Sankyu~ Vary ma~"

I'm so happy, I hold the lunch box set Lulu's made up above and spin merrily.
Today must be a good day too nyan.

◇

I'm patrolling the city again today.
Because, ninjas are destined to live in the shadow, I'll watch over the city's peace from the background.

Ah, it's dragonflies!
I chase after the dragonflies flying on the streamlet from the side, pyon pyon.

I wave my hands toward the oba-chans doing laundry, and the one~san holding a baby.
Everyone happily waved back at me.

Huh? Ninjas shouldn't have been seen.
Well, it's fine~

Ah, an old-man is being bullied!
Wait for me~ Ninja Tama, will go now~

◇

"Please wait! I can't continue my business if you take those!"
"We can sell her to the slave trader right?"
"Father! Help!"
"Ah, please forgive my daughter!"

Um~mm, these hoodlum people are bad people?
Complicated~?

"Hah! I'll let you off with these cooking tools and your daughter today!"
"Why, my debt should only be one silver coin!"
"There's this thing called interest! It's 100 gold coins now!"
"No way, even usury has a limit!"

Gold coins? Nyu~n?
I got one gold coin from Master this morning, but it's not enough.

Ah, they started beating the old man with sticks.
The Onee-san is crying!

Crying is not good!

"Tenshi! Chisi!　Miracurun! The mysterious ninja Tama appears!"

Oh right, I'll use ninjutsu here!

"Ninja art, Uchisemi no Jutsu~"

I changed the fainted hoodlums' with clothed logs in their places.
Leaving the logs, together with the hoodlum people to the roof, I ju~mp.

Err, I quickly tie the hoodlum people, and then throw them away to the back alley.
Spinspin~ spin, and poi.

"Eh?　The people from the Avarice Fox are gone?"

I secretly land beside the surprised Onee-san.

"Aku, soku, zazan!"

I'm triumphant while taking the victory pose.
Onee-san opens her mouth and hardens. Insects would go in you know?

"I exterminated them~ degozaru."
"T, thank you."
"You're wlcome~, nin nin."

Are you going to leave the old man behind you like that?
When I tilt my head and look at the old man, the Onee-san finally notices it.

"That's right!　Father, hold on!"
"Let him drink thiss~ degozaru."

Potion is the best for injuries you know?
They were surprised after he drank the potion from Master.

◇

In the park near the Ivy Mansion, I've a lunch.
U~n, there are a lot of greeneries here, I like it very much.
It's the next best after Master's lap.

If there was a short ear rabbit, I'd have chased and play with it.

Huh? Someone is coming.

Tama leaves a doll on the ground, and climbs to the top of a tree.
Because, I'm a ninja.

"Found you! It's you right! The one who beat up the third."
"Hey hey, what's wrong? Isn't she too scared she can't even turn around?"
"Gyahahaha~, We're the Avarice Fox gang who make children run away crying after all!"

Err, fat flag? Diet is hard you know?
The hoodlum people stab the doll with their swords and talk in loud voice.

They will notice soon?
When I don't have turn like this, it feels a bit, irritating.

"The hell is this? It's a doll!"
"Damn, she ran away!"

Ah, they're looking around.
They also look at the trees' tops, but they don't notice Tama. Because ninjas can't be seen.

It's about time for the windmill to appear!
I take out a windmill from my pouch and throw it to the hoodlums below.

Eyy.

"Uwahh, aniki! Aniki isss!"

Huh?
The hoodlums became squashed under the windmill.

Strange~, Arisa said that it was windmill for time like this.

"Why is a windmill in a place like this!"
"Oy, you alive?"

Are windmills and pinwheels different?
Evidence destruction~?

I collect the windmill with the whip sword and put it into the pouch.

"Ah, that pink guy is on such a place!"
"Oy, shoulder aniki, let's run."

Ah, they ran away.
I have to chase them! Because, they're running away!

◇

I jump from shadow to shadow while eating a potato and chasing the hoodlums.
This potato is delicious. I'll give half to Pochi.
Since I'll likely eat them all, I wrap the remaining potato and put it into the pouch.

"Boss! The pink monster is attacking!"
"What'd you say! Get Sensei here."
"Ey."

The hoodlum people are holding hatchets and bone clubs, I take it off their hands and hit them, take it off and hit them.
Holding back to prevent them hurting badly is hard.

"She's too strong."
"Is Sensei's not here yet!"

Two people left.
A bearded old man and a thin old man who've only been ordering around with loud voices without doing anything since awhile ago.

"Mou, I was still in the middle of eating the meat skewers nodesu! Punpun nanodesu!"

A samurai wearing haori hakama came out from the back!
Samurais are the rival of Ninjas!

Her face seen from her hood looks similar to Pochi, but Pochi's name is not Sensei, so it's a different person.

"The bodyguard of justice, Kin-san the bum nanodesu!"
"Mysterious ninja~?"

Her real nature is a mystery.

Kin-san pulls out a Japanese katana and sets it up.

"The way of full moon nanodesu!"
"Falling leaves~?"

I cut the coming red Magic Edge Cannon's halo with the ninja katanas on both my hands. I avoided two out of three, they flew and broke the wall behind. They'll get mad at you, you know?

To be able to use Magic Edge Cannon like Pochi and Liza, Kin-san is strong.

"My turn~?"

Using Bunshin no Jutsu, I split into three and attack in three directions.

"Amazing nodesu! As expected of a ninja nanodesu!"

Mumwu, she's moving fast like Pochi's Flickering Movement, attacking the bunshin.
Foul play~?

"If it's three people, then I just have to attack with triple the speed nodesu!"
"It's the real body this time tough~?"

From the ceiling, I randomly shoot shurikens.
I occasionally grab onto the ceiling, and make a feint.

"It's no big deal if it doesn't hit nodesu!"

All of them are swayed by her Japanese sword.

Amazing, amazing! There's a girl this strong besides Pochi.
I'll tell about it to Pochi later.

"I'm settling it with the next move nodesu!"
"Me too, certain kill technique~?"

Certain kill is written hissatsu (必殺).
Certainly not kill is 必生 (hitsunama?). Arisa told me that.

"Magic Edge Rush (Vorpal Lance)!"
"Magic Edge Twin Fangs (Vanquish Fang)."

The Samurai whose whole body shines red shouts the killer technique's name.
She understood the promise well~

◇

"Alright, stop there."

Huh?
I've been caught and lifted lightly.
I look up, and there's Master.

"Master~?"
"Master nanodesu!"

Huhuh?
I take off the ninja costume's hood and look at Kin-san.
She also took off her hood like me.

"Pochii!"
"Tama nanodesu!"

Now wonder she's strong, nyan.

People who came from behind Master are tying up the hoodlum people.

"Well then, Captain-san, I'm counting on you to deal with these people."
"Yes, Chevalier-sama."

It's the sentry Captain-san!
This person often treats me to a lot of meat from the food stalls.
While being lifted by Master, I greet him with 'shupin' pose.

"Why are you arresting me!"
"All you guys' deeds have been investigated by Marquis-sama's intelligence. In addition, since you were smuggling the necessary ingredients for Fiend Drug's production, you're charged with treason. Don't think you can defend it."

Complicated~ Make the explanation shorter!
While handing the potato from before to Pochi, I tell Master and Pochi my remarkable activities today.

SS: Lulu's Kitchen Knife

I'm going on a sea date with master today.

The ship is flying a bit higher than the sea surface though, but I don't mind the minor details.

I mean, it's a date with just the two of us.

"Lulu, you can see it now. That's the sign."
"That, is it?"

Master is pointing toward a flock of seabirds.
If I'm not mistaken, we're going to catch fish called tunas today, I wonder if it's been changed to birds?

"Un, the small fish those birds are aiming should be being chased by tunas."
"Yes, master!"

As expected of Master. He's amazing.
I've made a [Promise] to Arisa that I'd talk casually with Master after saying [Amazing] when I'm praising him. However, it feels a little embarrassing, when I let out my voice, I talk to him like usual.

"Master, are tunas delicious?"
"Of course! Especially the fatty tuna see, when you eat it, you feel like your mouth is melting! Ah, just how can I put this into words! Lulu will also understand once you eat it. It's such that you'll be hard pressed to say which is better when you compare it to the highest grade marbled beef! It's truly fit to be one of the two matchless kings of the sea together with whales."

I could only nod to master who was being talkative.
I mean, Master is like when Pochi-chan talked about hamburg steak, he's so cute. Ah, it feels like I'm going to have a nosebleed. I can really understand the feeling of Arisa who's grinning when she looks at Master once in a while. Even though Master is usually calm, the Master who's talking about his favorite things is sorta cute. It's a secret though.

"See, look under the sea, those are tunas... right?"
"Yes!"

Why was it a question Master?
Master who slightly bends his head looking doubtful is also lovely. Yes, Arisa would've said it's "Rare."

Tearing the sea surface, the tunas are flying and eating the seabirds.
As expected of the King of the Sea.
I wanted to catch several of the birds as souvenirs for Liza-san, but they're all going to be

eaten looking at the current state.

The tunas flying in the sky are coming here.
How gallant of them to come here themselves to get cooked.

I take out the golden-colored [Tuna Slayer] I've got from Master last night from the fairy bag. I can't use Magic Edge like Liza-san and the others yet, but I can do it if it's just filling it with magic power. I set up the huge two-meter long kitchen knife glowing blue light, and cut the attacking tunas right half in two. As expected of an [Orichalcum] knife. The sharpness is wonderful.

I wonder what's wrong? Master's smile is stiff.
I wonder if his fatigue from making swords every days has piled up?

I'll devote myself to make Master thoroughly enjoy the tunas he's looking forwards so much today.

Grilling the tunas' heads, and also making sashimis from them. Among the dishes, he was really pleased with the tuna sushis.
Even Arisa was crying while eating it.
She must really like it.

The words master said after he's finished eating, "It was really delicious, Lulu." is the highest reward for me. Since we've caught a lot of tunas, maybe I should make [Negitoro] and [Pickles] for him next time. There are some missing things like [Quiz] in the recipes I've got from masters, but trying to do various things for its completion is fun.

Ehehe~, my mother said something.

"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach ", she said.

Let's do my best tomorrow too!

SS: Hamburg Steak Fraud

"I'm home~?" "Nanodesu!"

Before entering the mansion, I washed my hands and feet with the water jug beside the entrance nodesu. Because Lulu would scold me if I didn't properly wash nodesu.

There's the delicious aroma of hamburg sensei in the mansion!
Huh? It's strange nodesuyo.

"It smells different nodesu."
"Stew~?"
"It's unusual for Lulu to change the menu by her mood isn't it."
"Nn."

When we go into the mansion, the head maid Miteruna meets us nodesu.
Lulu usually greets everyone with only her voice, "Welcome home everyone" from the kitchen, but she's quiet today nanodesu.

"Welcome home."
"I intend to report our return to Master."
"That is, Chevalier-sama hasn't returned from the dinner with Viscount-sama."

Master isn't here, it's lonely nodesu.
That Viscount person... nanodesu.

"The meal has been prepared, please come to the dining room. Aina and Kitona, take everyone's tools to their room."
""Yes.""

Chasing after Miteruna, I entered the dinner room, and not even one dream was there nodesu.

"Huhuh~?"
"Hamburg-sensei is not here nodesu!"

I climb the chair and look around, it's really not here nodesu.
I got scolded by Liza, "That's bad manner." but I think that there's more important thing to note nodesuyo!

"Ah, Lulu-san isn't present, so the hamburg steak has been changed to black meat stew. I couldn't use the kitchen as I please since the chef was absent."

Such cruel words from Miteruna went through my ears nodesu.

"Pochii."
"Tamaa."

While sharing the despair with Tama, I grimaced a little at the black meat stew I ate nodesu.

SS: Letters to Yuni

"Yuni?!"

"Ye~s, please wait for a bit. I'm going n~ow."

Heave-ho. These firewoods should be enough now.
I half-jogged to Martha-san who called me, and she pushed to me some kind of paper bundle.

"Umm?"
"They were brought by the merchant just now. They're letters for Yuni he said."

Letters? Maybe it's!

"Aah!　It really is!"
"It's amazing that you've acquaintances who contact you with letters like this, you're like a merchant or a noble-sama."

Ehehe~. I feel ticklish from Martha-san's words which sounds so envious.
I open the letters and read them.

First, it's from Tama-chan.

『Reached the labyrinth city. Tama.』

Tama-chan's letter is short.
But, I'm glad that they seem to have arrived at the labyrinth city safely.

Next, it's from Pochi-chan.

『Pochi and Master who had departed from Seryuu Earldom were attacked by more than 100 insects swarm in the mountain's foot nodesu. Pochi and Master together opposed the overwhelming insects by resolutely shot them down with crossbows nodesu. And then, the red helmet ratkin who was protecting a fairykin princess that we met--』

Er~rr, this is a letter right?
It looks like there are more than 100 pieces of Pochi-chan's letters.

....Yup, I'll read it later. Yup, that's good.

The next letter is from Arisa-chan. Even though we weren't too close, I'm glad that she's sent me a ltter.

『Dear Sir and Madam, I am pleased to hear about Yuni-sama's increasingly efficacious activities.
In regards to the present conditions of Pochi and Tama, everyone has safely arrived at the

labyrinth city without a single injury. The package that is sent together with this letter is a token from our Master, Chevalier Satou Pendragon, please receive it willingly.
That is all we can inform you in haste.
Sincerely yours,
Arisa Pendragon』

Stiff. Arisa-chan, your sentences are too stiff.
There were some lines that I didn't know and had the landlady-san to teach me though, but it's not a letter written by a child.

Satou-san, I thought that he was rich, so he really was a noble-sama.
In the package, there is a [High-class Hand Cream] for the landlady, a coral necklace for Martha-chan, and for me, there are a comb and a hand mirror.

A hand mirror!　It's the first mirror I've ever had!
According to the landlady, it's a mirror made from glass that's far away more expensive than the bronze mirror in the Seryuu city.
Uu, I'm happy that it's reflecting neatly, but I can clearly see my freckles.

Huh? There's another piece of letter.

"Ah, isn't it nice. After you write a reply letter, you can send it for free to the labyrinth city if you bring the letter together with this to the firm."

Yay!
I can't send a letter to the labyrinth city if I don't save money for around a year.
I've to write a reply about my present state quickly.

But, before that, I'm gonna read Pochi-chan's masterpiece all night today!

SS: Liza's Buying and Eating

"Oh, found Liza-san!"

When I came to the snack area before the west gate, I noticed her.

I was going to call her, but I shouldn't do it when she's in the middle of choosing the snacks to buy and eat. When I did it before, she shifted her line of sight like it was going to devour me. That was at the degree that can only be seen in a dream.
Under the pressure of that gaze, those old men at the stalls can serve their customers with a smile while washing the greases, they truly have the spirit of merchants. I'd have rated them [First Class] if their smiles weren't cramped though.

"Oy, isn't that the Black Spear Liza?"
"Oh, what kind of meat is she picking now?"
"Looks like she's hesitating between the lizard meat skewer and the rabbit meat bone skewer."
"Either is one big copper coin much huh~ As expected of a powerful Red Iron Plate explorer."

I heard the conversations of the explorers nearby. Liza is quite famous isn't she.
She's choosing between the steel lizard meat skewer and the rock rabbit meat bone huh. Either sounds tough.
However, that guy had given everyone one gold coin each early in the morning, so she could just have picked both.
Choosing between things is fun though so it's alright~

"Oh, she's chosen."
"Which is it?"
"It's the lizard meat skewer."
"Oy, oy, is she a cannibal."

Mu? When I turn around to see the one who said the last line, the neighboring Liza's fans are already beating him.

Arara, no turn for me huh.
I couldn't use magic in the middle of the city, so my skill-level-0 wand art was going to howl.
Maybe I should get self-defense skill like Lulu after all I wonder? I wonder~?

"It's splendid. The steel lizard's meat at first tastes like it's plain, but every time you chew on it, the savoriness oozes from inside--"

Uwah, oh Liza, she's begun to have a narration while biting the skewer.
But, is that really a meat? I can hear some strange sounds you know?

"Oy, Liza-san's『It's splendid』appeared. Looks like that skewer is a hit."

"Hah! You amateur. Listen the words after『It's splendid』well."

'Amateur' eh, you guys....

"Right right, you shouldn't buy it if she praised the chewy texture. Our feeble teeth not gonna stand against it."
"Don't lump me with you humans, there is no meat that we beastkin can't eat! Old man, give me the same meat as this guy's!"

The beastkin man who ignored the peanut gallery's advice and ate the same meat as Liza's crouches while moaning, "My teeth."
My condolences~
Even so, stocking a meat like that, what a challenger.
Since half of the meat skewers she holds have different color, I wonder if they're from different variety?

Liza is chewing the second type of meat she's picked. This time she's saying, "The chewiness is not quite there."
I see, so she wasn't picking which to eat, but which to eat first. I consent.

"Yosh, I'm going to get the rock rabbit one."
"Next time, when I earn a lot of money in the labyrinth, I want to eat the rock rabbit meat...."

I pray that the last guy didn't raise his death flag....
In the end, I was only able to call Liza-san after her fifth meat, the frog meat skewer.

SS: The Trick to Enjoy Food Carts

There are really too many things recommended by Liza.

Along the way, I took along the little girl maid who were on an errand and went on to capture sweets.

"It's not really that good isn't it."
"Really? Any one of them is delicious, I'm so happy."

The labyrinth bee honey pastry was slightly good, but ever since I ate the sweets made by that cheat Master, it felt lacking nowadays. This is a dangerous sign.

"Arisa-chan, that."

The little girl maid who walked beside me pulled my sleeve, and when I looked there, Pochi and Tama were together with other children flapping their mouth while looking at the meat skewer stalls near them.

What are they doing?

"Pochi, Tama, what are you two doing?"
"Arisa~"
"Arisa! It's a discovery nanodesu! If you sniff on the delicious smell from the stall, flap your mouth while matching a person eating meat skewer, it feels like you're eating one nodesu!"

Pochi stresses, exhausting her strength.

"Is it fun?"
"Of course~"
"It's very fun nodesu!"

I see~, it's fun huh~ but, let's speak without reading the mood.

"Hey."
"What~?"
"What is it nodesu?"
"You can just buy the meat skewers normally can't you?"

You guys got pocket money from Master too right?

"Ah" "Nanodesu!"

The two look at the money Pochi's taken out, and then tremble.

"Buying and eating~?"
"Biting at every cast nanodesu!"

No I don't understand what that means.

"How many~?"
"You got one gold coin right? You can buy 100 pieces of meat skewers with it."
"A hu, hundred nanodesu?! Can you eat that many nodesu?"
"You won't be able to eat Lulu's dinner if you eat too many, be careful okay."
"Aye~"
"Nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama cutely make the 'Shuta!' pose, get close to the meat skewer stall, and buy a large amount of frog meat skewers from the surprised stall old man. Looks like the warning earlier fell on deaf ears.
No no, those many skewers are impossible even for you guys right?

"Line up~"
"One skewer for each nanodesu!"

Ah, they're distributing the skewers to the children who were watching the stalls together with them huh.

The children who got the meat skewers unanimously say their thanks to Pochi and Tama. Looks like the two are embarrassed with it, they are unusually being bashful.

Surrounded by around 10 children, the two are eating the skewers with great relish.
The little girl maid has intruded among them too of course.
That girl sure is shrewd.

"Delislish~"
"Grills are really the strongest after all nanodesu!"
"It's really good."
"Un, it's not hard like black meat."

Ah, the oil from the skewers are falling to Pochi's and Tama's chest, stickying them.

I know now the reason why Lulu made them wear cheap common dress.
That girl is steadily becoming a wife~

"I'll give them to Arisa too nodesu."
"No, I'll reserve myself."
"Eat the reserve~?"

It's not that I'm reserving. My waist has been painful since awhile ago.

"I've been eating sweets just now, so I can't eat anymore."
"Diet~?"

Ahh, like a revolving lantern, it's flashing on my mind, that days of suffering!
I absolutely can't do that again. I can't!

"You really don't want it nodesu?"
"It's delicious~ see?"

Don't tempt me~
I pulled the little girl maid's hand, and escaped that place at full speed.

Because, I don't want, to diet again!

SS: Very Popular

Hm? This melody is Mia huh?

Just now, I've eaten yakitori with Liza, this time it might be nice to eat some sweets with Mia.

That girl is liked by old people, so she often gets simple sweets from the locals.

Um~m, she's on this open space I think. I think?!!
Hwhat!

"Arisa?"

Mia inclines her head while looking at the surprised me. Damn, aren't you cute.
The good looking men who were listening to Mia's lute play beside her glanced at me once, but they immediately lost their interest and looked back at Mia.

Kuh, what's! With that attitude!?
Tsk, Mia, even though she usually behaves like a spoiled child, saying [Satou] or the like, she's this popular behind our back!

A kind-looking black-haired shadowkin young man, a bad-boy-type red-haired leprechaun boy, a stiff blond-haired longears-kin, and an ash-colored short-haired ogre-kin man with a bit of muscles surround Mia like they're protecting her. They are all so good looking no one will object if they refer themselves as one. What is this, otome game?

"Mia, aren't you quite popular. Affair?"
"Mwu, no."

Even though it was a joke, she denied it seriously. Maybe there was some envy in my words.

"We have hurriedly come here in order to protect Mia-sama's day off."
"I'm here to hear Mia's lute though."
"Use 'sama'! The elves-sama of Boruenan forest are the masters we should serve!"
"Fufufu, Mia-sama always looks so young and lustrous like a green grass."

Black, Red, Gray, and Gold, The handsome men pamper Mia in turns. Riajuu explodes!
I mean, I want to be popular too! Mainly with our Master!

"Arisa, want?"

Mia raises apple-like red fruit from her lap and offers it to me. Looks like the fruit is gouged to act as a container. The inside has the fleshes of the fruit cut and soaked with something that looks like syrup.

"Un, give me a bite."

I open my mouth, a~n, and have Mia spoon me a bite. I don't usually do something this les-like, but I did it in order to show it to the handsome men around us.
Oh, they're really glaring at me. Surely, they must be envious.

Chomp, I gulp the the content of the spoon Mia is presenting. The taste is also similar to an apple. I thought that the syrup was maple, but this is honey I think? No, this viscous feeling is the ant nectar. U~n, I think honey is better for this one.

"How many point?"
"60 points I think. It'd have been 70 points if it used honey."

The blond handsome man is shocked to receive my strict evaluation. That guy made it huh. Like our Master, being good at cooking like this despite being a man, are you a character of some otome game.

A man should just be good enough to microwave curry powder or ready-made porridge to make them explode. If they don't do that much, I can't participate in the delicious situation of nursing them.

I didn't have such an opportunity even once though.... orz.

I was going to invite Mia to a sweets tour, but since the retired people in the neighborhood had gathered to listen to Mia's music, I left that place while saying, "Later." I shouldn't take away the pleasure of old people in their remaining years right.

◇

I caught sight of Pochi and Tama having a feast on a stall with some dogkin boys, but it must have been an illusion.
It must've been a shock after seeing Mia getting surrounded by handsome men.

Un, seeing Nana carrying a white featherkin and a black featherkin infants on both her hands must also be a mistake.
Please let it be not a kidnapping!

I came across a group of children in a vacant lot. They're children of our orphanage. They're doing a volunteer work by weeding the vacant lot I guess?

"Ah~! It's Arisa! Let's play hide-and-seek, hide-and-seek!"
"You can't, Arisa-chan is going to play house with us! Arisa-chan's demon lord is amazing you know!"

Ah, why are the one who come after me are all kids~
Looks like I'm going to play as a demon lord again. Let me become the princess once in a while too!

Damn it, I'll play so hard to bury my worries today!

"I'll play in turn! You guys! Be prepared!"
"Ou!"
"Ya~y!"

I played hard until the sunset and went home.

Maybe because I played fully, and ate fully during the day, that even though it was the long awaited day of me sleeping together with that guy, I went asleep before I could enjoy his sleeping face.

Ah, I want to flirt!

Intermission: Golden Knight and the Caged Birds

The sight monitoring system has raised an emergency directive.

Adding the object before my sight with priority tag.

There are two figures of young organisms over there.
They are imprisoned in the birdcage hanged in front of the slave trader.

The logic circuit urges to have me rescue them.

Executing rescue--Error.
Re-execute--Error.

This is a grave situation.
Confirming that the reason for the error is Master's commands which have the maximum priority.

There is an entry that prohibits me from relocating articles without being accompanied with money transfer.
It cannot be helped.

I do not have the authority to break the prohibited matter.
I step into the firm, and proceed to secure the young organism via the regular route.

"Proprietor, I want to release these children, so I claim."
"If it isn't explorer young lady, you have discerning eyes. These are quite a rare species even among the featherkins--"

In summary, "Bring me 100 gold coins if you want to own the young organisms", such an unreasonable thing has been established.

The money in hand, two gold coins.
Lacking 98 gold coins more.

I will have Master's support.
In accordance to the answer from logic circuit, I leave the shop.

◇

"No."
"Please reconsider."
"No."

Master refuses to secure the young organisms.

I tried to entice him with puff-puff, but Lulu interfered.

Logic circuit announces that without Master's support, helping the young organisms is hopeless.
I am troubled.

"What's wrong? Nana-sama"

The beastkin person who works as a teacher of the training school applies for a conversation.

"I am currently searching the way to secure fund. If you have a good idea, please present it."
"Let's see, I think everyone from Pendragon probably can subjugate the Ruby Golem in the upper Area 33 for quick money?"

After searching the name 'ruby', I've identified that it is a kind of gem.
The size of the ruby that composes the body of a golem should be worth at least 100 gold coins.
I tell my thank to the informant and leave right away.

"Ah, Nana-sama. Nearby the Ruby Golem, Deadly Poison Slimes are--"

◇

I confirm the route on the explorer guild, and depart to the labyrinth.
I change my equipments with Orichalcum ones, and raise my moving pace. If I were slow, the permitted time to release them would expire.

Following Master's example, I exterminate the small fries with Flexible Swords, and crush the strong ones by smashing them with the Orichalcum great sword.

『What's that? A golden knight?』
『Oy oy, who the heck is that? It killed the labyrinth scorpion with a single blow.』
『Maybe it's some Red Iron bunch?』
『There's no one that showy!』

Sometimes I pass by other explorers, but since dealing with them has low priority, I put actions like talking with them to the furthest end of the processing queue.

Against opponents that occasionally appear and are ineffective against material sword, I promptly eliminate them with nature magic.

『Oy, did it just use chantless magic?』
『Chantless, the hero-sama?』
『It's the golden hero-sama!』

Some explorers that I've saved by chance apply for a conversation with me, but since my

processing queue is packed, I cannot respond.

This time, a hydra with five heads is blocking the way.
I want to promptly eliminate it, but since other explorers are fighting it, eliminating the hydra would classify as one of the prohibited matter, [Sideswipe].

Every one of the explorers is acting inefficiently.
I searched for the way to cope with this, and got one conclusion.

"I ask! Do you wish for relief!"

Yes, if the other party requests relief, it won't qualify as a prohibited matter.
It's an excellent idea if I do say so myself, so I praise myself.

"Please help us!"
"I take charge of the relief."

Activating the function [Fortress] on the equipment that Master has given me.
Eight force shields and three magic walls block the hydra's fire and poison breath.

I do not have overwhelming offensive power like Liza and Pochi.
However, I have the the impregnable defensive power that Master has bestowed.

I nullify the entire attacks, and eliminate the hostile unit with plain great sword attack.

"Ooh! The hydra's head is cut with one swing of the great sword!"
"Apart from that, why is it fine against the hydra's flame that can even melt iron!"

I am equipped with Master's armor.
This result is natural so I analyze.

I eliminate the hydra and hurry toward Area 33.
Noise asking about the core entered my hearing circuit from behind, but since its sequence priority was low, I canceled it.
In order to increase my moving speed, I grant myself physical reinforcement with nature magic.

◇

I check that here is Area 33 from the Sign Monument.
I could have defined the Ruby Golem's location if I had Master's enemy searching function.

Discovered a passage full of slimes ahead.

Using Force Spear to eliminate them--failed. Confirmed it absorbs force spear.
Using Flexible Sword to eliminate them--failed. Cutting is not effective. Confirmed it absorbs the blade.
Using the great sword to eliminate them--failed. Cutting is not effective.

Searching for effective countermeasures--not applicable.
I evade the slimes and continue searching.

Discovered a Ruby Golem in the space ahead.
Confirmed several slimes along the way.

Searching for effective countermeasures--not applicable.
Searching for ways to get close to Ruby Golem--not applicable.

Searching for effective countermeasures--not applicable.
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Searching for effective countermeasures--not applicable.
Searching for ways to get close to Ruby Golem--not applicable.

Confirmed that the logic circuit is looping.
Analyzing breakthrough measure--discovered Arisa's collection of sayings, commencing search....

Discovered the countermeasure.

Booting up multiple [Shelters].
Activating Orichalcum Armor's emergency vernier.

I pass through the defending camping slimes with the sudden acceleration.
Confirming the scattered slimes behind me.
Threat level, low. I leave them alone.

"Ruby Golem! If you think that you're great since you're a gem, that's a misunderstanding, so I refute!"

I crushed the approaching Ruby Golem with continuous [Force Spear (Javelin)] blows.
Since the objective is rebelling, I use the great sword carefully, I'm worried with my remaining mana.
The condition that allows the use of emergency measure has been cleared--utilizing the magic recovery potion.

All Mission Complete.
Commencing return.

◇

"This is a Ruby Golem! How did you get it in complete shape!"
"Conversion."
"No, how did--"
"Conversion."
"Ah, yes. Please wait a moment."

I've safely secured 100 gold coins.
Successfully safeguard the young organisms in the slave firm.

Naming the white featherkin young organism [Shiro].
Naming the black featherkin young organism [Kuro]--error.

Searching the library, re-naming it to [Crow].

After returning home, I introduce them to Master.

"I have secured them. They are Shiro and Crow."
"Return them."

Master-!
Searching for countermeasures to oppose the merciless order--Requesting supports from friendly units.

"Please reconsider."
"No."
"Isn't it fine, raised right, they can be the communication unit, or the bombardment survey unit~"
"Cute~?"
"That's right nanodesu!　Cute is justice nanodesu!"
"Nn."
"Master, I would also like to ask for it."
"I am sorry to intrude, but since Nana has bought them as slaves, how about training them as maid apprentices?"

With the help of friendly units reinforcement, Master finally raises the white flag, and I have safely acquired the permission to let Shiro and Crow take a new post in the mansion.
With feeling full of gratitude, I was going to do puff-puff that Master liked when we were going to bed, but I received concentrated bombardment from the friendly units.

It is absurdly baffling.

I evaluate that expressing gratitude is something with high degree of difficulty.
While being confused with bewilderment and delight, I wrapped myself with Shiro's and Crow's wings, and fell asleep.

Intermission: The Journey of Zena Squad

"Lilio! I've found some survivors! Call the laborers here!"

"Hooi!"

Contrary to her light answer, Lilio whips out her body that's collected fatigue to run.
I hurriedly chant the next magic since I can't overlook it.

"Zena-san, you're using too much magic. Please take a longer break."

Even though Iona-san is worried about me, I shake my head to refuse it.
I tell her that helping the people who are buried alive is more important right now.
As expected, after chanting so much my jaw is hurting. I have to be careful as to not fumble the [Whisper Wind] magic chant.

"Iona, since the rescue over there is going well I've come to help."
"If Zena-san is in the middle of chanting spell, Ruu should be the one who talks with the man in charge of rescuing. Is it alright with you?"
"Yes yes. Will do."

Even though Ruu's voice had become like a man since she shouted so much, she still undertook it gladly. Ruu is like a dependable big sister, she can help calming the people who are waiting to be rescued.
After I've confirmed the activation of the magic, I shift into meditation while leaving the rest to Ruu. I have to restore even a little of my magic power in order to use my magic to look for the next survivors.

There are sounds of galloping horse, and Iona-san who's on lookout nearby, tells "Successor-sama has come" to me who can't open my eyes during the meditation.
I want to recover my magic power a bit more, but continuing to mediate in front of an upper-ranking noble will be too impolite, so I give it up.

"So you're Lord Marientael. Your good jobs have been conveyed even to me."
"Yes, I am honored."

Did the next Earl-sama come himself to say his gratitude to a mere soldier?

"I heard that your little brother-kun succeeded the house. If you wish, you can be my retainer. At first I can only grant you honorary noble peerage, but I promise to make you become a permanent noble depending on your work."
"I am undeserved of the invitation, I have already pledge my allegiance to Earl Seryuu. Please kindly pardon me."

It's quite an extraordinary invitation, but as a person of Marientael house which has worked under Earl Seryuu for generations, I don't have any intention to work under another house

after all this time.
The young Earl successor seemed to think that he wouldn't be refused, his face looked unpleasantly angered. However, it seems he has enough tact to not act on the feeling.

"Is that so, if you change your mind, you can come anytime. I'll always leave a seat vacated for you."

After saying so, he left with his knight attendants.

"Are you alright with that Zena? When your little brother-kun succeeds the house next year, won't your standing fall to a quasi-noble?"
"I don't mind. As long as I'm in the army, there's no difference between a noble or a commoner."
"Right isn't it~, Zena-cchi has the boy waiting right."

Mou, Lilio!
Satou-san has nothing to do with--maybe a bit.

"Moreover, it's not decided whether he will succeed the earldom or not after all."
"Really?"
"On top of piling up many victims, he borrowed the power of the Saga Empire hero-sama to defeat the demon after all."
"I see, he made a blunder on top of having no achievement. To make matter worse, he rashly made people out to the field who then died, so the young master's fame has dropped to ground."
"Wait, Ruu."

There's a limit even if you're only speaking your mind. What would you do if Earl Lesseu's man heard it!

◇

Another 10 days has elapsed after the fight with the demon is over.
Among the selected Seryuu city labyrinth regimen, half of the front-liner have been killed in action. Norina squad and ours are miraculously unhurt, but Rodril magic squad and mixed squad are mostly annihilated.
The day after the fight with the demon, Captain Derio who had lost one of his arm, and a holy knight went back to Seryuu city in order to report to Earl-sama.

A carrier pigeon was sent at the same time too, so the reply from Seryuu city should be coming soon. In case the reply never come, we're going to go back to the Seryuu city after we've finished confirming the survivors and the KIAs of the Labyrinth Selection Regimen.

The Vice-captain Riro who was thought to be dead was found safe under the debris, but he had to pay with one of his leg for his life.

"Everyone hear me. The directive from Earl-sama has come--The Selected Regimen is to continue their mission."

Everyone has various reactions toward the order read by Vice-captain Riro, people who are spirited, people who are dejected, and people who smile bitterly.

"Vice-captain, please, let me go back to Seryuu city. People can call me a coward behind my back all they want. I just want to be near my wife and children."
"Vice-captain Riro, I also want to go back to Seryuu city. I can't swing the sword well with this hand."

After the man with big body, a retainer man who has lost one of his arm from the demon's tactical magic proclaims so dejectedly. Several other people who seem to be in agreement also press the Vice-captain Riro.

The Vice-captain Riro holds them back with both hands while smiling wryly.

"Don't get flustered. There's a continuation to the order--"

People who have lost their limb, and people who has lost their will to continue to the labyrinth city are to go back to Seryuu city, so it's said.
Surprisingly, Rodril is also going back to Seryuu city. She really must have been enduring the fact that she was the only one remaining after her escorts were all dead.

◇

"Knight Henz, I entrust everyone to you."
"Yes, I will become as good as a Shiga Eight Swords when I return to Seryuu city."
"Hahaha, that's the spirit."

I wonder if it's just my imagination? I feel that Riro-dono's laughter was dry when he encouraged the new captain, Knight Henz.
In the end, there are only 18 people who will be going to Labyrinth City, Selbira, which are the Knight Henz and his attendants, Norina's and my squads and the civil officers, and lastly the survivor from Mixed Squad, Gayana and another soldier.

After seeing off the people going back to Seryuu city, we also hasten our preparation to leave Lesseu earldom.

"Zena, do you really not have any regret?"
"What is this about?"
"Didn't you receive an invitation from Successor-sama."

Norina who has finished her preparation brought up the subject as if making fun of me. Not only me, I think she was also invited by the next Earl-sama though?

"Look, I was invited to become a common magic soldier."

I wonder what is Norina talking about?
I think the Successor-sama invited me only because he wanted to have a magic soldier nearby though?

"I've said it's useless. Successor-sama's desire completely didn't reach Zena-cchi at all."
"Right~ I mean, the one who came for me was a retainer, but for Zena, it was the Successor-sama personally himself who came."
"Right~"

Lilio, and even Gayana-san and Norina-san were saying some strange things. If you think about it normally, there is no way a legitimate child of an upper-ranking noble would want a daughter of the lowest-ranking noble like me as his partner.

If Knight Henz who couldn't read the mood didn't order us to depart, Ruu and Iona-san would have joined the nonsense love talk.

Thus, we departed from Lesseu's earldom while the snow started dancing in the sky as if they were pushing our backs.

◇

The journey from Lesseu Earldom to Zettsu Earldom was quite hard. The remnants of the monsters collected by the mid-class demon had built their nests here and there.
I thought that the safety of the main road was the responsibility of the Viceroy, but Knight Henz, who sympathized with villagers grieving about how the soldiers weren't patrolling, undertook the job to hunt the monsters, resulting in our journey not advancing well.

It seems Earl Lesseu's Army which was nearly destroyed aren't the only army that aren't patrolling their area, Earl Zettsu's army are also not. If the rumor about Earl Zettsu we've heard along the way is to be believed, it's because the army have been gathered to protect the cities against the demon's surprise attack.

After a long journey from the north to the south of Zettsu Earldom, we have finally arrived at the southernmost city. Once we leave this city, we should be entering the territory directly under the royal family in several days time.

It's just a little more until the labyrinth city--please wait for me Satou-san!

"Hey, isn't Zena looking strange?"
"Ah~, that's she thinking about the boy, firing herself up. Pretend you don't see it and watch over her heartwarmingly."
"That's right Ruu. The power of love is really wonderful isn't it."

Mou! Everyone is saying as they please!
Especially Iona-san! Your mouth is laughing.

◇

"There's a sign of an enemy between the cloud above!"
"Is it a monster?!"
"It's most likely a wyvern!"

With Lilio's warning, everyone has started to prepare the action that each one should do.
We've been accustomed with the appearance of a powerful enemy ever since we departed Seryuu Earldom. Everyone has already grasped their own role.

"All members, prepare for anti-air battle!"

Knight Henz orders vigorously.
Ah, it seems there's one person who hasn't grasped his role here. However, the Retainer-san promptly covers for him. It seems he's been a retainer for generations, looks like he has it hard.

"The order is revised! Evacuate to the woods beyond that hill! If the wyvern approaches, Zena and Norina are to knock it down with magic to gain some time."

Everyone began to follow the order while looking relieved.

"Sure wish our new captain (temp) properly understand his own region's strength. No way dozens people could win against a wyvern."
"Lilio-san, please stop wit the (temp). Even though he's like that, he's doing his best to bear the sudden heavy responsibility."
"Because Iona likes weakling. If a man comes crying to--no, never mind. That's why, stop pulling out that great sword! Okay!"

Iona-san is going to pull her great sword while smiling, but I think this isn't the time for that.

"Lilio! Look at that wyvern's tail and right wing!"

The scout of Norina squad confirms to Lilio about the out of place feelings she's sensed from the wyvern.
How'd she see at that high. I can only see it as a small black lump.

"Un? Let me see~, ah! Everyone abort the retreat! That's the Wyvern Rider of the Kingdom."
"The one's riding on it--is wearing a white armor! Perhaps it's Sir Trell of the Eight Shiga Swords? I've heard that he rides a wyvern right?!"

The white armor knight is waving his hand while circling in the sky at low altitude.
He must be under some kind of mission.

On that day, we heard an unexpected story in the border city, Fau.

"Dragon?"
"Yeah, because of that, all caravans going to the Royal Capital have been stuck."

Apparently, a lower-class dragon has nested in the mountain range on the territory's border.
As one would expect, a real dragon, even though it's a lower class, isn't something that humans can do something about. We have no other choice but to be stuck in this Fau city for the time being.

Intermission: The Journey of Zena Squad (2)

We've been stuck in Fau city for one month already.

It'd been alright if there were some way to detour the mountain-pass the dragon was occupying, but so long as we can't fly like a bird, we don't have any choice but to go back to Lesseu Earldom and go through the mountains range in the south route passing through Muno Earldom, or circumvent through several small kingdoms by passing through Eluett Dukedom.
It'll take several months to go through Muno territory route, and going through the small kingdoms is out of question. Even though the purpose will be not to wage war with them, we are still the army of Seryuu Earldom after all.

"Zena-san, how about your side?"
"Unfortunately, every store has raised their price compared to yesterday. We really should have bought it the first day we arrived in the city."

Regardless whether we choose to go through Muno Earldom, or wait for the Royal Army to repulse the dragon, securing provisions are important in order to resume our journey, however, the prices have become so bad we can't buy enough amount. We tried to go the neighboring farm villages to buy directly, but some sharp merchants had already bought them all.

"Zena-cchi~"

There's a small shadow waving hands beyond the crowd.
I can't see the figure, but there's only person who call me like that.

Lilio and Ruu who have gone to investigate for the shortcut come back after 10 days. Doing it in the middle of the road like this would surely make us a hindrance, but I couldn't stand it and went to hug them, celebrating their safe return.

"Welcome back Lilio. Did the shortcut look usable?"
"People can probably go through it, but it's impossible for the civil officials and the maids."
"It's hard even for soldiers you know? Even I gave up in the middle of the way while wearing my usual armor."

If it's impossible for even Ruu who prides herself in her stamina, it's surely something that's harsh for officials-san.

"We also saw the dragon on the mountain pass."
"It's really a lesser dragon?"
"No, that's--"

According to Ruu and Lilio's story, it doesn't seem to be a lesser dragon. I've certainly never heard a dragon which has colorful collar on its head. Moreover, it doesn't have wings. In

Iona's opinion, it's, "Probably a sub-species dragon-monster like wyvern or hydra."

"Then if it can be defeated, we can go through the mountain pass right."
"If we're talking about size, it's even bigger than a real lesser dragon, moreover, it can spew out mist-like thing that can melt stones see~"

I was relieved to hear that it wasn't a dragon for a brief moment, but then fell like a withered blooming flower from Lilio's and Ruu's words.

"Do you have any idea why it's placed itself in the mountain pass?"
"Apparently it likes the oranges growing on the pass. It was having a nap while chewing the oranges together with the trees y'know?"

I wonder if it's a grazing monster? Thinking about the feeding habit of the monster is probably pointless since it apparently drank the stones it melts.

For the time being, I suggested them to report to the captain, and then we went to the temporary residence with heavy steps.

◇

When I saw a young man with black hair, my eyes involuntarily chased after him.
Considering the time when he departs, Satou-san should've been around here.

Ara? I feel like I've seen that black haired person--I wonder who?
Lilio who chased my line of sight said, "Ah! Found you!", and then ran after him.

"That Lilio, what's wrong with her?"
"It was the kid who was waving to Lilio when we left Seryuu city before remember."

I remember after hearing Iona-san's words. It's someone from Seryuu city, a one-armed person called Joi, or Jomis who taught me the way to make croquette and starch syrup. Even like this, I'm good at remembering person's face, but I can't remember that person's name or face no matter what.

"Why are you here now when you departed Seryuu city three months ago? Didn't you said that you'd make it big in the labyrinth city?"
"Didn't I say that the plan was undecided? I heard that there was a ruin on the verge of Zetssu Earldom see, so I went there to have a look."
"Did anything appear?"
"You can say something did, and did not appear."
"What's with that-!"

Lilio and Jo-san's conversation continues without a pause. Even though Lilio should have been tired from the investigation, she seems to be enjoying their conversation while smiling lively.

"It's said that even goblins can't eat a couple's squabble, so let's leave these young couple

and report the shortcut investigation to Captain Henz."
"You're right. Feel like I'd get a heartburn if I remain here."

We waved our hands to Lilio and went back ahead to the barracks to report.

◇

"Another shortcut? Is there something like that?"
"Un, according to his story, looks like there's one."
"But Lilio. Even the soldiers-san of this city said that there was only one shortcut didn't they?"
"You see, there seems to be a road that goes pass the valley where the dragon-sham from before resides, see. Carriages can't pass through there, but the slope is gentle so it should be better than the the other shortcut."

Everyone becomes enlivened with the information that Lilio carries when she gets back as the night advances. Since there's a possibility we can break the current situation.
Knight Henz was looking like he would immediately charge to the valley, but his retainer skilfully arbitrated him, and then it was decided that we should send a scout unit first.

However, why does everyone look at me?
--I feel a bad premonition.

After clearing his throat once, Knight Henz ordered, "Then, I entrust Zena Squad to investigate the valley." Of course we do not have the right to veto it. After receiving the mission, we began to prepare the investigation.

◇

The next morning, in order to hear about the shortcut from Lilio-san's boyfriend, we went to a restaurant in the downtown.

"Then, the problematic places during the journey are the valley where harpies are nesting, and the rocky area that springs up slimes?"
"Yeah, there are other places where monsters come out, but judging from what I've heard from Lilio, you guys should be able to pass through the valley with the fighting forces you have."

We're checking the boyfriend's story with an opened map. The map is roughly made, but it's filled with landmarks until the opposite side.

"Ara ara, my my, Jon-kun is building a harem."
"Geh, Mito."
"What? Your acquaintance?"

A woman who seems to be the boyfriend's acquaintance appears, and then she pokes the boyfriend's cheek while floating a joyful look on her face. She has the same black hair as the boyfriend's, and looking at their faces, they seem to come from the same town.

Is this perhaps the thing called *shuraba*?

"Oh, it's a *shuraba*."
"W, wait, Ruu."
"That's right, it looks more like a relationship between a man and a woman, or rather like between siblings."

If Iona-san who's sensitive in regard to relationship said so, it must be true.
I was panicked that it would become a shuraba.

"This is Mito, a grandma dressing like a young woman."
"You're cruel, I've said that I'm eternally 20 years old haven't I? I'll spank children who can't be obedient you know?"
"That way of talking smells of grandma."
"Gaan."
"Don't say that out loud."

Is it my imagination that they look like they're flirting?
Lilio's mood is worsening.

Ah mou, what should I do!
I look toward Iona-san for help, but she seems to be enjoying the situation. Ruu has been eager to be the curious onlooker from the beginning...

"What kind of acquaintance?"
"I picked her up in a ruin."
"Ruin? Is she an explorer?"
"A loo~ong time ago. There was a time when I was an explorer."

I feel that she's not an ordinary person, but she doesn't look like a warrior at all. I wonder if she's magician? If that's true, she doesn't seem like she has any wand or tool to invoke magic.

"Is she maybe your new girlfriend?"
"That's impossible. I'm not into grandmas."
"That's right~ Far from having feeling to this cheeky brat, I don't even see him as a man."
"Fu, fuhn. Okay then, I believe it."

Lilio finally softened after hearing the woman declared that she didn't have any feeling toward the boyfriend-san in relaxed manner.
After finally returning to the main issue at hand, we finished listening about the route. We would have liked the boyfriend-san to guide us if possible, but--

"I can sneak into any place if I'm alone, but I can't show my real ability if I'm with other people. Since my fighting power doesn't even reach you guys' foot. I don't intend to follow you since I'll only become a drag."

--He confidently refused like such.

◇

We pass through the valley that has strange steams coming out of the ground. It's called Withered Valley, and just like the name implies, the trees here are withered. It's alright if we're here for a short time, but it'll be bad for the body if it's for long.

Due to the spraying steam, the scenery in the distance is hazy, the poor visibility is worrying. Monsters could have a surprise attack if we let our guard down.

"Seems that the harpies should appear soon."
"Un, should I go to scout?"

I contemplate for a short while whether I should let Lilio going ahead alone.
However, the contemplation is a bit too late. In the next moment, a shadow interrupted by flying pass us overhead.

"Take the anti-air formation! Lilio search for the enemies around us. Iona-san, I'll leave the command after this to you."

I begin to chant the spell for anti-sound defense.
A Captain who can't command once she starts to chant, geez!

"Yes. There's a high possibility that the shadow earlier is a harpy. Lilio-san, how many crossbow's short arrows do we have left?"
"Sorry, there's only seven left since we used too many for the monster earlier."
"There's probably only one enemy. Those many should be enough."

Un, with Lilio's skill, seven should be plenty enough.
However, the way the harpy flew earlier was odd.

"....■■■■ Sound Protection"

It's perfect with this I think?
The fearful thing with harpy is its sleep-inducing song.
If we can just defend against that, Lilio should be able to take it down.

I start to enter meditation to recover my magic power right at this time.
If it's as I've expected, I'd better recover my magic power to the maximum now.

We couldn't hear anything thanks to the soundproof, but the harpy attacked from top of the forest while screaming something.

"Hahha! With a target this big, I can hit it with my eyes shut!"

Lilio's arrow hit the root of the harpy's wing, and the harpy which had lost its ability to fly crashed to the ground.

"Ruu, guard Zena-san!"

"Ou! Leave it to me."

Iona-san mercilessly smashes the harpy's head with her great sword.
Lilio has also pulled her short sword, but it looks like there's no turn for her.

And then, slightly after it, the creature that was chasing the harpy showed its visage between the gaps of the Withered Valley's trees.

That is the strongest being--

Intermission: The Journey of Zena Squad (3)

--that is, Dragon.

Something that humans can never win against.

The existence that even the mobilized holy knights from the royal capital were barely able to repulse.

It seems to be a lesser dragon judging from its body size, but there is no point to such classification. If we fight we will definitely lose--no, it won't even be a fight, but a simple trample.

That appears from beyond the haze, glaring at us.
The dragon is doing just that, but it's enough to make us forget to breathe and solidified our body, we cannot take any action.

The actual elapsed time should only be for a moment, but I feel that it's the longest I've felt in my life.
As if losing its interest, the dragon shifts its line of sight from us to the harpy's body, and then he's turning its head toward the haze once again.

I almost fell down from the relief, but even slight sound might attract the dragon's attention. I grit my teeth and endure it.

The dragon was going to turn its body around, at that time--

--A new intruder appears.

『Heya, heya! For I am! The one praised in Shiga Kingdom, the fourth seat of Shiga Eight Sword, Trell the [Gale]! Right now and then, I challenge dragon-dono to a match!』

He's begun to introduce himself to the dragon while circling in the sky while riding the wyvern
Shiga Eight Swords are the strongest warriors of Shiga Kingdom. It seems there is a magic weapon that's even longer than a lance on the hand of Sir Trell who's riding the wyvern.

However, his opponent is too much for him.
It's something powerful enough to fight the greater demon which appeared in Seryuu City Castle alone. If the Silver Masked Hero didn't appear at that time, none of us would have been able to survive.

The dragon collects its power and in an instant springs up to the sky, flying without even doing an approach run.
Its eyes I saw when it was jumping up was glittering like a mischievous boy, it must have been my imagination.

"Oy, Lilio! You've to run now. That goes for the squad leader over there too."

My arm was caught and pulled from behind.

It was Jon-san wearing leather armor who has appeared out of nowhere.
Behind him, there's the woman called Mito wearing casual clothes as if she's "I'm going out for a bit to buy something", she waves her hand lightly when our eyes meet. As excepted she does wear journey boots, but it's amazing how she's wearing those clothes to a place like this.

"Oy, squad leader-san?!"
"Oh right, all members disperse! To behind the rock!"

I came back to my sense from Jon-san's puzzled words, and then ordered everyone.

◇

In the sky, the dragon is fighting Sir Trell like it's playing around. It's as if a cat playing with a mouse.
During that chance we successfully evacuate to the crevice on the Withered Valley's rocky cliff that Jon-san led to.

"Sheesh, there wasn't any dragon when I came here before y'know?"
"Ara? Isn't there a rumor about a dragon in the whole town."
"That's about the sub-dragon thing that likes oranges above the mountain pass."
"Therefore, we should assume that it's the existence that's driven away the sub-dragon above the pass."

Jon-san and Mito-san are casually talking in front of us, but my mind hasn't recovered enough to participate. Actually, even Lilio is only watching the conversation between the two while looking displeased, since she's not in the state to join them.

It seems the dragon is tired at chasing them, it knocks the wyvern down to the ground.
The knocked wyvern is rolling on the ground toward us while getting the withered trees mowed.

"Oy oy, don't come here."
"Ara ara, that wyvern can't fly anymore I think?"

Just as Mito-san's said, the wyvern's arm that supports the wing is broken until the middle part, it's in awful state.
It probably can't fly anymore unless it's healed with advanced healing magic.

The wyvern seemed to have absorbed the impact as Sir Trell who had been thrown from such height was still able to firmly hold his lance while shedding blood.

『O Dragon! I hang my whole life on this spear! Warriors, hand down my deed!』

Red light tingles on Sir Trell's lance, and then the tip of the spear produces light.
Perhaps that's--

"Magic Edge eh"
"That's..."

Jon-san held his breath and remained silent after hearing Mito-san.
Magic Edge is a secret technique that only two people can use even in Seryuu Earldom.

『Now! Come! Magic Edge Rupturing Strike!』

Sir Trell charges toward the dragon while wielding the lance like a cannon ball. The ground he's stepped upon is gouged, flinging dust behind.
While leaving red afterglow on the white haze, the lance stabs the dragon as if sucking into it.

With that technique, it should be able to pierce through the dragon's scale no doubt!

The lance tip is creating intense sparks on the dragon's surface. Yet, the lance tip doesn't even reach the dragon's scale. It's blocked by defensive membrane of light that acts like an armor, appearing before the dragon scale before I knew it.

『Not yettt-!』

Responding to Sir Trell's spirited yell, the red light that covered the whole lance's surface gathered on the tip, and it successfully cracked the defense membrane of the dragon a little.

"Awesome."
"Old man's cool."

Beside me, Mito-san is clapping lightly. I wonder why is this person is so carefree.

『GROUUU?』

The dragon leaned its neck to one side, and removed the lance that had stopped on its scale like someone brushing off a biting bug. Sir Trell who's distracted by the sudden disappearance of the lance on his hand is flicked away by the dragon's hand.
Like the wyvern earlier, Sir Trell rolled on the ground and then lost his consciousness. His level should have been more than 40, yet someone like that is played like a child to such an extent...

The dragon approaches Sir Trell, and poke him with its finger to see his reaction.

"Zena-tan, can you use healing magic?"
"Y, yes, I can do the simple one."

I'm concerned with Mito-san's strange way of calling me, but it's not the time for that now.

"How about something like the advanced『Cure Stream』?"

"I'm sorry, I'm only up to middle rank..."
"Is that so, then healing bone fracture is not possible."

Mito-san doesn't look like she's dejected by my words, and then after contemplating for a bit, she speaks unexpected words with a cheerful smile and walks out.

"Then, can't be helped. Everyone hides here okay."
"Oy, grandma Mito. Old person's indiscretion is--"
"Is this the bad mouth here~?"
"--young beautiful Onee-san, it was a slip."

Jon-san was going to follow Mito-san who had carefreely gone out of our hiding place, but Lilio-san hurriedly caught his arm and hugged it on her chest. I also tried to stop Mito-san with low voice, but she told me, "It's okay, just watch", with a smile.

"The dragon-kun over there. The game's ended okay~. The old man can't fight anymore, so can you go back to Fujisan Mountains?"
"**ZUGOOOUN**"
"Ara, it's really no use?"

She took out a stick from a black hole that had appeared beside her.
Is that a wand? Or maybe a flail?

"Can't be helped. Then I'll be your opponent for the second round."

She produces transparent blades and boards around her that look like something created with nature magic. They are like shields that protect her, like spears that eliminate foreign enemies, and like living creatures that follow her every movement.

It's like the offense and defense advanced magic of the Ancient King-sama in the legend--magic? Come to think of it, when did she chant the spell I wonder?

"Lets get away for a bit!"

The invisible rain of cannonballs that Mito-san has shot hit the surface of the dragon and get repelled away. The dragon who was standing upright when it fought Sir Trell just before looked like it was hurt from this attack and flew to the sky, running away.

--A dragon is running away?

"Then, I'll be going for a bit."

She went to challenge the dragon in the sky by jumping through the sky, as if there were invisible scaffolds in the air. This might be the first time I've seen someone nimbler than Satou-san.

I don't know the detail of Mito-san and the dragon's fight since it's unfolding beyond the Withered Valley's haze.

However, from the screams of the dragon, and laughter full of joy that could be heard once in a while, it must be a one-sided battle.

If people hear about this story, they must not believe it, thinking that it's a joke.

◇

After we've finished giving emergency treatment to Sir Trell, the area around here has become silent as the battlefield may have moved beyond the Withered Valley.

"Hey, just who is that person really?"
"I said I dunno. She was sleeping beyond the hidden door in the depth of the ruin."
"Maybe she was living in the ruin interior?"
"That can't be right."
"Rather than that, can you please be quiet for a bit?"

I close my mouth from Iona-san's words, and listen carefully, I can hear sounds of flapping wings from beyond the haze. So it's the dragon who won in the end I wonder?

"Oy, it's over."

It was the figure of Mito-san waving hand on the back of the dragon. Her other hand is holding a chain produced by magic that connects to the dragon's head as if it's a horse rein.

"I'm going to return this child to Ten-chan in Fujisan Mountains, so this is a farewell. Jon-kun, it was short but fun! If you miss me, you can probably find me in the downtown of the Royal Capital."
"I won't miss you! Or rather, take me along with you!"
"I'm sorry, I can't bring other people to the sacred ground of heavenly dragons. See ya."

After Mito-san said so while waving energetically, she flew away beyond the sky by driving the dragon. Her figure was like the Ancient King-sama and the Dragon Knight-sama that appear in the story of the kingdom found.

◇

In the end, we decided to part from Jon-san and the Withered Valley, and stopped our search to carry Sir Trell back to Fau town.

About Sir Trell, it seems he was going to retire from Shiga Eight Swords due to his old age, and so he was apparently searching for an opponent appropriate for his parting. During that occasion, he heard the rumor about the dragon, so he thought it would be fit to be his last opponent before retiring, so he said.

It seems he never thought that he would survive int he first place, he muttered, "I've failed to die" while staring at the empty sky while the day is fading into twilight. He must be praying for the peace of the wyvern that has died.

About the shortcut search which had been interrupted, we didn't need to resume it.

A few days after this, the sub-dragon has been eliminated.
I've heard hearsay that the one who subjugated the sub-dragon wasn't the dispatched Royal Knights, but the violet haired Hero-sama who wielded the kingdom-defense holy sword Claiomh Solais.

Maybe.... That Hero-sama's identity might be Mito-san.

Thus the dragon disturbance ended, and we were able to resume our journey toward the Labyrinth City once again after we acquired provisions from some kind merchant.

After many mysterious cases, we finally arrived at the gate of the Labyrinth City. The two huge stone statues on both sides of the gate are glaring as if they were the gatekeepers.

This here is the labyrinth city, Selbira.

I'm going to see you soon.
Satou-san!

SS: Hot Sand Extra Hard Training

"Arisa~, How many me~ter~?"

『Wait a minute, it's 1109 meters eh.』

"Wa~i, new record~?"

『That's right, congrats.』

Arisa is talking from beyond the sand dune.
Magic is amazing.

『As expected of Tama nanodesu. Pochi also won't lose nodesuyo!』

I see Pochi greatly waving her hands beyond the sand dune.
With a small [Pohyun] sound, Pochi jumps.

--ah, she broke her balance.

She begun to spin, guruguru bosun, and then she got buried into the sand dune.

After Pochi, Liza and Nana also jump.
Both jump shorter than Pochi's.

Because, they're big.

Pochi who's buried in the sand dune isn't coming out.
I rushed to her anxiously, but before I could dug her out, Pochi pushed her way out, wasa wasa, and came out.

"Peh peh, I failed nodesu."

Pochi shakes her body to remove the sand.
Of course I had ran away before she did that.

"Mwu."
"I'm sorry, nanodesu."

Mia who's been completely covered with sand is pouting.
Pochi apologizes to Mia while brushing the sands off her.

『Pochi, you're 1050 meters. Unfortunately.』
"Regrettable nanodesu."
"Pochi, don't mind~"
"I won't lose next time nodesu!"

Pochi is challenging for a rematch while taking the shupin pose.
Of course, I'll take up her challenge anytime.

Because, Tama is the onee-chan.

◇

I'm having a dashing competition with Pochi to race back to Master.
Mia who's buried in the sand behind us is really angry.

Pochi goes first this time.
She leaps toward the third [Acceleration Gate] ring with the Flickering Movement.

"Uwah~, nanodesu~"

Pochi jumps and spins like before.
She looks like she's having fun.

Perhaps, doing the jumping spin is fun?

I looked up when I felt a gaze, there was the gentle smile of Master.
I reflexively laugh, nipa~

"You can imitate Pochi if you want, but be careful not to talk during the spinning since you could bite your tongue okay."
"Aye aye sir~"

Master sees through everything nyan.
Tama replies Master with Shupin pose, and then goes toward the Acceleration Gate.

Yo~i, don!

I try to break my balance in the air like Pochi.

Spin, spin, my eyes are spinning.
The sky goes below, the ground goes above, it's dizzyingly fun.

Even though Master's warned me, laughter escape my mouth spontaneously.

Ah, the ground is already--

I plunged into the sand dune like, 'Bosun'.
But it can't stop the jumping force, I break through the sand dune, pop out to the other side just like that, and then roll and roll on the ground.

--Fun.
I shake the sand off, exchange a look at Pochi who's run to me worryingly, and then laugh out loud.

Now, once more!

SS: Hot Sand Extra Hard Training (2) Flying Boots Arc

--It was fun.

After playing so much until I can't move anymore, I'm resting on the water bed that Mia's made.

Pochi is also sleeping beside me.

Arisa who's together with Master and Lulu came teleporting in.

"Everyone, is there any place where it's hurt?"

Master asks full of worry, but it's alright.
There is no pain anywhere, I'm only sleeping from fatigue. Everyone replies the same.

"Looks like firing the catapult with the acceleration gate and the deployment of [Shell] to act as the gliding board are going well."
"However, isn't it dangerous if they break their balance like Pochi if it's not in the desert?"
"Pochi isn't hurt nodesuyo?"
"Un, normally people will hurt badly with that velocity even if it's in the desert with the sand acting as cushions. However, the some of the [Shell], besides the part that acts as gliding wings, protects the passenger with thin membrane, so some amount of impact is not a problem."

Master's explanation is difficult nyan.
I'd like for something a bit simpler.

I drink the [Sport Drink] that Lulu gave me and recover my spirit~?
After drinking and giving the cup back to Lulu, Tama plays signal with Pochi who also doesn't understand.

"Then, let's try the Flying Boots this time."
"It's the magic circuit that was used for the False Claiomh Solais back then huh. Have you finally succeeded making people fly with it?"
"It's a different circuit than that one. The fuel consumption is very bad though. This magic circuit is something that imitates the Sky Drive I use."

I wear the pink boots that Master gave me.
The small wings beside the heel are cute.

"When you put magic power into the boots, a force field that will support your body will appear for an instant."
"Aye~"

"Do your best nodesu!"

Nyunyu, it's difficult.
My feet are sticking like kyuu, and fumu. It's like when you fall into a pit hole.

However, it's fine.
Because, Tama is a ninja.

"Oh, as expected of Tama."
"Uwah, you're walking in the sky. You're good~"

Master and Arisa praise Tama.
More, praise Tama more please. Tama grows up with praise.

"Mumwu."
"Ah, I fell! Nanodesu."
"It's difficult isn't it."

On the side, Mia and Pochi didn't do well, their faces crashed to the sand.
Liza seems like she hasn't risen from the ground in the first place.

"Keep at it~"

I cheer everyone while walking in the sky. With [Appare] and [Hinomaru] folding fans I've got from Master on both hands, I dance the [Raisi-ng Up] dance.
Arisa taught me to do this for when I'm cheering.

Aryarya, my eyes are spinning~?

"Are you okay, Tama."
"The sky is spinning~?"
"You ran out of magic power huh. The circuit really still need improvement after all."

Master supplied me with magic power while I was being princess carried.
Since it's become like this already, I'll cheer everyone while we're like this.

Master's arms felt warm, it was full of happiness, I went to sleep.
I, I have to cheer...

--Impossible nyan.
The drowsy person is too strong.

....Good nigh~t. ZZzz.

SS: The Melancholy of Leriril

"I can't believe it!"

No one will reply even if I raise my voice in my private room.
Even though I've been entrusted to take care of the mansion left behind by Sage-sama, a human brat becomes the new master....

It would have been nice if it was the elf Misanalia-sama instead.
Moreover, he made up a foolish story like being a friend of the high elf-sama and even made Misanalia-sama to take part in that. He's a vexing guy.

Fururuu, the Manager Medallion is making a sound.
When I looked at the Medallion while thinking it was probably the brat calling, turned out it came from the world tree.

I check my appearance in a hurry, then I tap the Medallion lightly, turning it into a telephone.

『Nice to meet you, you're Lirerul right?』
『Aze-sama, that's wrong. It's Leriril.』
『Eh? No way oh. I'm sorry, Lerirul』
『I said it's Leriril.』

I usually would have shouted, "Stop mistaking other people's name", but I don't have leeway to do that now.
Because the one who's projected from the Medallion isn't just a normal elf-sama, it's the Sacred Tree-sama that looks so divine as if it's smashing my eyes--High Elf Aialize-sama....

I will surely die today.
Even just meeting an elf-sama has taken me 10 years of my duty, to think that I'm exchanging words with the Sacred Tree-sama whom my senile Grandfather never meets.

I don't care about something like mistaking my name.

『Lirerel, please treat Satou well okay. Satou should be able to use the Ivy Mansion's facilities effectively. He's also aware of Touya's last will, so I'm sure he will only use it for good.』
"I will follow Sacred Tree-sama's wish. I will serve him with all my heart."
『Aze-sama, there's a call from Birowanan clan regarding the philosopher's stone matter from before.』
『Ara, I should go see them right away. Then Leriril--um, it's right isn't it? Do your best to help Satou okay.』

To get an encouragement from Sacred Tree-sama and called me by name!
Aah, I'm elated enough to die happy. I'll help the brat with anything if there's an additional

gain like this.

◇

"Huh? Are you not with Misanalia-sama? Br-, Satou-dono."
"Yeah, Mia is working hard in the labyrinth. I've come to use the workshop."

For a mere human to call elf-sama with her nickname, he's a very impolite guy.
However, since Holy Tree-sama has asked me, this Leriril will smash her selfishness and help you.

He probably won't be able to operate even one facility of this mansion without my help anyway.

....Why is he operating a device he's just seen for the first time like it's usual for him?

"Ah, that's because I've looked over the documents left by the late Trazayuya. Moreover I've been in [Hearing] with Giril about the Ivy Mansion's facilities, so there's no problem. Leriril, sorry, but I'm going synthesize the culture fluid, so can you please bring me some hygienic tray and large bucket?"
"Y, yes."

He shouldn't be able to use them even if he has been taught though.... He's managing them well isn't he?
Weird. Even this Leriril-sama learned the way to use those equipments only after undergoing hellish training from senile Gramp for several years.

But, brat, Satou-dono is using them normally.
He's like a chef cooking a dish using tools he's familiar with.

He's using several alchemy equipments with magic in parallel, I can't believe my eyes.
Moreover, even though he's assisted by the Fake Core of this mansion, he hasn't lost his magic power even after using those many magic at mad pace, I can't believe he's a human.

It's too impossible my head's hurt, geez.
He's certainly fit to be recognized by Sacred Tree-sama.

That's it! Satou-sama must be a demi-god or an apostle of the gods pretending to be a human, no doubt 'bout it!
I can consent to that.

There's no way a human can be a friend of Sacred Tree-sama, and married to an elf-sama.

"I'm going back to the mansion since some urgent business came up. Leriril, I'm sorry but please clean-up the workshop."
"Yes, I understand Satou-sama!"

I have to serve him with all my heart from now on!

After seeing Satou-sama who's going out, I rolled my sleeves and went to clean up the workshop.

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